TURTLE'S EXPEDITION RESCRIBBLED

VOLUME 3

CRYSTAL CRISIS

TurtleDoodle1 • Viddo3k • Sohekun
Falin • Midas • SuperTails32

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

THE BEGINNINGS	4
JOYCE'S QUEST	77
CHAPTER 25: RESCUING A NEMESIS	146
CHAPTER 26: HOME SWEET HOME	191
CHAPTER 27: GENESIS OF A NEW ERA	209
CHAPTER 28: PARTY POOPERS	245
CLOE UNDERCOVER	273
CHAPTER 29: BRANCHING PATCH	347
CHAPTER 30: BOW AND ARRAY	372
CHAPTER 31: INNER CONFLICT	397
CHAPTER 32: GOT METAL IN YOUR THROAT?	433
CHAPTER 33: INSIDE THE CASTLE	467
CHAPTER 34: NEW FRIENDS AND ENEMIES	493
THE CHAOS DETOUR	528
CHAPTER 35: DOUBLE JOYCE	632
CHAPTER 36: CATCH THE POTATO!	664
CHAPTER 37: XTRESS' CALL	708
CHAPTER 38: FIGHT FOR THE KINGDOM	752
CHAPTER 39: MAIZIE'S GAMES	818
CHAPTER 40: THEIR CHOICE	860

BONUS CONTENT

BONUS CHAPTERS

THE BEACH EPISODE	915
HALLOWEEN TALES	923
SRP OF THE FUTURE	1000

CHARACTERS 1047
MORE WORLDBUILDING 1056
RETURNING LOCATIONS 1057
MAIZIE'S FATE & VENGEFUL RUBIES 1059
RISKIN TRIBE 1060
CHAPTER 40'S ENDING 1061
SCRAPPED IDEAS 1062
ART GALLERY/FANART 1064
WHAT'S NEXT? 1104

WRITERS

TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K(CH26,33,37 & CU 2-3)
FALIN (HALLOWEEN TALES PT1)

EDITOR

FALIN

ARTISTS

VIDDO3K
SOHEKUN
FALIN
SUPERTAILS32
MIDASGOLDGUYIDK1
JELLYENID (CH40 COVER A)

(Special thanks to @FANGNULL for designing the current logo of the series.)

A TE:R STORY
ADVENTURES FROM PERDIAH
#1
0_0
THE BEGINNINGS (1/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
CON

THE BEGINNINGS (1/3)

Months before the Crystal Kingdom incident. It was a lovely day on Planet Perdiah. Bushra and the Tender family were on their way for a camping trip! All of them seemed excited for the long journey ahead. They started climbing up a very familiar mountain via stone stairs.

Uncle Tender!
Are we there yet, are we there yet-

Not yet, Emily.
Just keep climbing.

Alright!

* looks down *
Hey Bushra, how is the weather over there?

Meh, could be better.

I see.

* holds his hand *
I stil can’t believe we are going camping, Uncle Tender!
* unzips Robert and picks up PotaTeo *
Brother Teo also seems happy!

* smiles *
Don’t mention it little ones.
As long as you kids enjoy your time here, I’ll also have a great time. Although…
* looks at Bushra *
Why didn’t G come with us, Bushra?

Oh, right. He said he wanted to spend some time alone.
I think he is just trying to get used to his limbs working again after the toaster fiasco.

Oh yeah, that.
* chuckles *
It was so confusing and goofy at the same time.

It sure was, hah!

Bushra, you told me you knew of this place when I invited you over.
Have you ever been here by any chance?

Actually, I have.
It was a long time ago though.

That’s pretty cool.

Totally.

* yawns *
I don't remember the way up there being this long though.
I think I'm starting to agree with the kids on this one.

I think we should be there…
* looks around *
Right about… NOW!

Artender stops in his tracks and steps aside to show the kids where they arrived. They saw how gorgeous the view from up there was. Bushra remembered this place from the time he first fought against hoodsters with G and Bushra by his side. Back then, this mountain was home to one of Hood's bases. And it was extremely hard to climb too. Now, however? Mountain of Worth was a nice camping area with a newly built stone staircase to help Perdians get up there safe and sound.

Woah… this place is great, Uncle Tender!

Yeah, I gotta admit, Artender.
You picked a very great place for this.

(smiles) Thanks, you all…

PotaTeo jumps out of Emily's hands and starts dancing around in excitement. Artender was happy to see how overjoyed his kids were. Bushra on the other hand, was looking around the camp area to see if there were any spots left but he couldn't help but wonder… was the base they destroyed still around?

Sorry for ruining the mood buddy but can I ask you something?

Uh… sure?

I heard from a “friend” that there was once a hoodster base around these parts.
He wondered what happened to it.

Oh, that?
I’m pretty sure it got destroyed or just got abondened.
Why do you ask?

Uh… just curiosity.

I see.

Oh also… can I put down the camping equipment now?
My back is killing me.

Oh yeah, of course!

Artender helped Bushra put down the equipment as the kids started playing around the area. PotaTeo picked up a rock and showed it to his sister, he seemed proud of his find. She looked at it in amazement.

Woah, awesome looking rock!
Are you gonna keep it, brother Teo?

PotaTeo gave her a thumbs down. She got really confused. He started using the rock as a chalk and drew a familiar looking shape.

Ooh… you want to play hopskotch?

PotaTeo gave her a thumbs up and started the game by jumping over the shapes. Meanwhile; Artender was preparing the grill while donning his grilling apron.

So we got the coal, the grill gates… but where's the food?

Artender walks towards the resting Bushra and pinches him.

OW, HEY!
What's the big idea?!

Where's the raw meat, Bushra?!

The raw meat?
I thought you were getting those.

NO?! I told you I would wake up the kids and get the coal!

…shoot.

Uncle Tender?

ACK!

Um… is something wrong?

N- no, Emily-dear.
We were just preparing the food, yeah!

Hm…

Bushra noticed Artender sweating out of fear.

Okay then!
See you later, Uncle Tender!

Artender takes a big sigh as Emily goes back to playing hopskotch.

Hey, what was that all about?

What are you talking about?

Why did you lie to her?
That was so unlike you.

…to not make her more upset than she already is.

Hm… that's…

Yes, it's complicated I know.
Let me guess, you are just gonna tell me to "get over it"?

Nope, not at all.

Artender takes a deep sigh and sits close to the lake. He needed some kind of refresher. Bushra sits next to him with his fishing rod and starts fishing.

Uh… are you feeling alright, buddy?

No… not at all.

Hm…

Bushra picks up a rock and throws it to the lake as it hops a couple of times before sinking.

Are you still getting used to Emily as a part of your family?

I guess… I'm just afraid that she won't open up to me about her feelings.

Huh, why do you think so?
You took care of the potato man just fine.
What's so different about her?

Isn't it obvious?
She used to have people who took care of her… her parents.
I don't want her thinking I'm trying to replace them…

Pfft… that's ridicilous!
I say just go with the flow!

What do you mean?

She JUST joined your family, buddy.
She will need some time to get used to her new life.
That's why you feel that way.

Uh… wow.
That's oddly mature of you.

Don't mention it, buddy.
All I'm saying is… try to get to know her for the time being.
Alright?

A- alright.
* wipes his tears *

Thank you so much, Bushra!
I don’t think just one talk will completely fix my problem but… it’s a start.

It is a start, indeed.

The two fistbump each other and then hug it out. The two couldn’t really interact with one and another a whole lot after the Xtress war ended but now, they were closer than ever.

Wow, that felt good.
It’s like everything is right in the world!

Glad to hear that.

Well, it would be… if we had something to eat.

Yeah…

Bushra’s rod suddenly starts shaking.

Speaking of the devil!

Bushra holds the rod stronger and then jerks the rod up, hoping to catch it. And sure enough, he was able to catch the fish, and it was a big one too.

And THAT’S how you get it done.

* starts clapping *
Bravo, Bushra! Crisis alerted!
Now we don’t have to buy something to eat!

Yup!

Bushra picks up the fish and puts it inside the nearby bucket.

Although…

Eh, what is it?

Bushra stands up and gives Artender his fishing rod with a smile on his face.

What are you-

Call Emily and the potato man to fish with you.
It will help you get along with both of them.
I can set up the tent and prepare the food.
You can thank me later, hah!

I… don’t know what to say.

* chuckles *

Well you said one sentence, that’s enough for me!
* picks up the bucket *
See you three on the flipside!

* still looking at the fishing rod *
Sure… See you.

Artender was still conflicted despite what Bushra told him. Was he ready? He took a deep breath and thought to himself ‘Only one way to find out.’

Hey kids!

Emily hears his call and stops jumping. She picked up PotaTeo and ran towards her uncle.

What happened, Uncle Tender?
We were just playing hopskotch.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Brother Teo is really good at this game!

Heh… I figured.
* smiles *
Say, would you kids like to fish alongside me?

Ooh, of course! Sounds like fun!
What do you think, brother Teo?

PotaTeo nods.

Awesome! How do we fish, Uncle Tender?

Well, kids…

And so, Artender started explaining how fishing worked to the kids. While he wasn't the most experienced with fishing, he still remembered a bunch of stuff Bushra told him about. When Emily got the basics, the three started fishing.

A few hours of silence passed by with no trace of fish anywhere. "Bushra makes it look so easy.", Artender thought. Right as he was about to give up hope, the rod started shaking again.

Uncle Tender, it's moving!

Oh, crud!
* holds the fishing rod with Emily *
Pull it Emily, pull!

I- I'm trying!

Teo, help us!

PotaTeo looked determined and held the other end of the fishing rod with his newly grown fingers. As the three of them continued pulling the road towards them, the fish finally jumped out of the lake and into their hands.

AHA! We did it!

Yippee! We did it, Uncle Tender!

Artender reaches out his hands for a hug and Emily happily gives him the happiness he wanted all along. He was finally sharing a moment with his daughter.

Are you… crying?

* smiles *

Heh… no. You must be imagining things.

Hey, look over there!

Wha-

Artender holds her and tickles her armpits.

HEHEHE! STOP IT, UNCLE TENDER!

* stops and pats her on the head *

Of course, little one.

You are funny, haha!

Thanks…

Artender picks up the bucket and the three go back to the camping area. The others campers were already sleeping as Artender predicted. It was getting pretty late. When they arrived at the camp

area, they saw Bushra resting right next to the camping area with a grilled fish right next to him. The tent was ready too.

I’m impressed, Bushra.

Thanks but what took you guys so long?

Well…

We caught a fish, Mr. Stoked!

Ooh, that’s awesome!

Yup, she’s a natural!

That’s cool.
* yawns *
Man, it sure got late huh?

Sure did.
I think we should eat before the cows come home.

Good idea!

The four of them sat down and started eating their pieces of the fish.

Bushra suggested cooking the other fish they caught as well but Artender told him not to. Emily seemed attached to it so he didn't want Bushra to get a hold of it. After everyone was done with their fish, Artender stood up and started talking.

It's getting pretty late so we better prepare to sleep.

But Uncle Tender!
I don't feel sleepy!

Yeah, I agree with the kid, buddy.
I really don't feel like sleeping now either.

Sigh… if you guys say so.
* sits back down *
So, what should we do?

Hm…

I have an idea!

Go on ahead, Emily.

Maybe we can tell spooky stories to each other.
We used to do that with my old girl scout friends!

That’s a fantastic idea!

Oh, I was thinking of making marshmallows but sure. This works too.

PotaTeo gives Bushra a thumbs up and starts making marshmallows for the two of them.

You really are a cool potato, you know that?

PotaTeo nods. He semeed pretty happy.

So, who wants to start?

Oh, oh!
* raises her hand *
Me! Me! Pick me, please!

* smiles *
Sure, Emily.
Go for it.

YAY!
* coughs *
Well, it’s called….

LITTLE MISS IN A LITTLE HOUSE!

“There was this one girl who loved partying with her friends! One day, she was preparing for another one of those parties. But when she got there, she found outthe party was cancelled!“

Emily does a lightning sound affect with her voice.

“She didn’t know where to go to…”

Can’t she just go back home?

Ssh… let her continue!

Okay, fine.
* eats a piece of marshmallow *
Let’s see where this goes.

“She couldn’t stand not partying for a whole day. She had to find some other party for the night. And so, she traveled inside the city to find more partying people like her! But every house was either pitch dark or just empty… except for one. There was a small house with all of its lights open. The little girl knocked on the door and no one responded. But after a few seconds passed, the door magically opened all by itself!”

Uh huh…

“When she entered the small house, she looked around to find friends she can party with! But when she turned around, she saw GHOSTS!”

PotaTeo hugs his dad in fear.

“But these weren’t any regular ghosts…”

Oh?

“They were… PARTY GHOSTS!!!”

Huh.

“And then, they invited her over to their party! The ghosts and the girl partied around the house until the girl started getting tired. She waved them goodbye and then smiled when she realized she made new friends! The end!”

Artender and PotaTeo started clapping for her while Bushra was left confused.

That’s… it?

Yeah! What did you think, Mr. Stoked?

Well… to start, the whole thing is just all over the place.
Like where are her parents?
Did they not worry about their daughter?
How did those ghosts even become “party ghosts”?
Why are they haunting that very specific house?
How did they even die-

* frowns *
Yeah, I think that’s enough, Bushra.
I would like to see YOU come up with a better story!

Tsch… me? Sure, buddy.
My story is called…

THE FISHER HERO!

“There was this one fisher, just casually fishing all by himself in the middle of the night. He used to fish at that exact spot every single day. One day however, he heard roaring sounds coming from the forest behind him. He knew something was up so he decided to follow the noise cuz’ of his bravery! His intelligence brought him to a place filled with berry bushes. He decided to eat one of the berries cuz’ he was hungry. But when he tried to pull one to eat… BAM!”

EEK! W- What happened?

“A two headed dragon suddenly jumped out of the bushes and shouted their name for everyone to hear. The Hoodzilla XV!”

Ooh!

A two headed dragon… jumped out of the bushes?

Ssh… let me finish. Here comes the best part.

Bushra coughs.

“Our hero slowly but proudly walked towards the dragon. He knew they were a worthy opponent. He shouted his war cry and ripped out his shirt to attack the monster! It was a fierce battle between two godly beings. The monster was starting to lose the fight. The fisherman’s power… it was too strong! So he gave up and gave his alligance to our hero. The fisherman told them to go back where they came from. The fisher looked at the dragon as they ran away to

the unknown… never to be seen again. The end!”

Bushra waited for the camp’s reaction only to find Artender frowning and the kids sleeping because of the boredom.

Wow, good job Bushra. That story sucked!

I- Don’t talk to me like that!
YOU come up with a good one then!

Can’t. The kids are sleeping.
I need to get them inside the tent before they get a cold.
Just collect back all of our stuff and then get inside, okay?

…Sure.

And make sure to put out the fire as well, okay?

…

Artender picked up both of his kids and tugged them inside their camp bed. He kissed both of them on the forehead and went outside to check what Bushra was up to… only to not see a single trace of him anywhere.

B- Bushra? Are you there?

No response.

Come on, Bushra! This isn't funny!

Artender was getting a bit worried. Why would Bushra leave so abruptly… or did he even leave by his own choice to begin with? He had to investigate. He opened up Robert and picked up a flashlight and started wandering around the camp area. He didn't want to wake anybody up in the middle of the night so he had to keep quiet. As he walked further and further, the voices of owls and bats got louder and louder. He couldn't have gone off too far, Artender thought. He thought of possible places Bushra might have ran to. But then, he remembered something.

(Did he go to the destroyed base?)

Artender broke a nearby tree's branch to use as a weapon to protect himself. If somehow any hoodsters kidnapped Bushra, he needed to save them both. Before he could process what was going on, a ghostly figure appeared behind the bushes.

Oooh, I have killed your friend Bushra! Ooh-

Before the ghost could finish his sentence, Artender hit his head so hard that the figure fell down to the ground and started making sounds of pain.

Gosh darn it, Bushra!
You scared the crap out of me!

Ugh… I didn't know you were that strong…
* holds his head *
My head…

That’s what you get for playing tricks on me!
* throws the stick at Bushra’s chest *
Get up already, we both need to have a good nights sleep.

Ugh… sure…
(Didn’t believe in karma before I can definitely now confirm it exists!)

A TE:R STORY
ADVENTURES FROM PERDIAH
THE BEGINNINGS (2/3)
VIDDO3K
MIDASGOLDGUYIDK1

THE BEGINNINGS (2/3)

It was a cloudy day at Town Unda, now Headquarters for the Crystal Kingdom. Some of the Crystal Knights were waiting for any orders from their Queen, except for one of them. She was constantly thinking about how some of the MPC members managed to escape, and she found their recruit rather interesting. He was all alone, sitting in the cafeteria all by himself, so she decided to strike up a conversation.

Hey kid, you're the new one, right?

Yeah.

I see.

She sits right next to him, much to the recruit's surprise.

You look awfully lonely, maybe you could use some company.

I guess, yeah.

Reserved much, aren't you?

I guess.

…wow, you're kinda boring dude.

Oh, yeah? Then what about you?
Maybe you have some super interesting life story!

Hmm… maybe I do, but maybe you don't care to listen.

Well what if I did care?

I guess I have no choice but to tell you about it!
You know Town Unda, right?

Hm… I think I've heard of it before, yeah.
Isn't it the Queen's headquarters?

Yep. That's where I used to live.
It was nothing more than a quiet little town far off from the big cities.
Until the Hoodsters started to attack, everything was pretty peaceful and, honestly, a little boring.

How did you manage to deal with the Hoodsters?

Well, lucky for me, I had some experience with swordplay and trustworthy co-workers!
It worked for a good while, until the attacks started getting overwhelming, to the point that we had to eventually evacuate from the town.

Fair enough, a bunch of other towns and villages fell the same way.
But since you're here now, you did come back, right?

Yeah, I did, and it was very interesting.

Now you caught my attention, I wanna know more about it!

Very well…

A few months back, after the Xtress war…

Aw… I hate this stupid forest…
Terry, how long do we have to keep going through this?

Don't worry, if this map is correct, we should be there in a few minutes.

What do you mean 'if this map is correct'?

Just trust me, will you?

Can you two stop shouting?
I thought I told you to keep a low profile!

Yes boss.

See? We're already here.

I don't wanna say I told you, but…

Shut up!
I'm sick and tired of walking!

The trio quietly walks around the surroundings of the town, to see if there's anything or even anyone.

After searching all around, it's clear that there's nothing besides a few birds, so they decide to finally venture inside the town, only to be surprised by something never seen before.

Hey, why is that mushroom so big?
They're not normally that big, right?

No, Lydia, they're not.
I wonder why they're here though, there shouldn't be mushrooms

this big in a place like this.

walking closer to the mushrooms
Would you look at that. They're made out of crystals.

Woah, that's awesome!

That's worrisome, how do we get rid of them?

I don't know, maybe we can smash them with something.
It's crystal after all.

Not sure boss, I don't think it's a safe idea.

Right as he says that Lydia picks up the first object she sees and hits the mushroom right away, but instead of destroying it, she bounces back from it.

...Nevermind.

Ow… how did that happen?

So I guess destroying it like that won't work.
Do you have any ideas?

While Clara and Terry try to think of anything, Lydia hears

something far off in the distance. She quickly gets up and sees some smoke coming from the forest.

Hey, Terry, I think something just exploded over there.

Lydia, I think you're nuts…
Oh wait, you're right.
I'll go see what's up, you can try to help boss.

Okay! Be careful though!

As Lydia catches up with Clara, Terry steadily makes his way to where the explosion was spotted, and surely enough, he finds where it came from.

Turns out some sort of rocket ship made its way to the forest; the machine was absolutely trashed in the impact, and oddly enough, there was no sign of a driver whatsoever.

Hmm… this is rather interesting.
I'll need to bring this back to boss, we might figure something out.

But right as he's about to pick up the rocket, he hears screaming from the town, it was not a good sign.

However, whatever that creature is, surely it was something nobody would've expected to see…

A living trash can?

kicking the creature
Waaahhhh!!!
I knew this was a bad idea!!!

While Clara tries to stop Lydia from getting herself hurt, Terry, who's finally reached the town, tries to attack the creature with his bow.

Unfortunately, though, the little monster is way more agile than expected, thanks to its "arm" having a small wheel attached to it. It also absorbs any arrows Terry shot at it with its other arm, that was connected to a plastic bag, or something that looked like one.

That won't do… Lydia!

still sobbing a little
...Yeah?

Remember that axe you conveniently found on the floor?

This one…?

Exactly! Now follow me and let's trash that… thing!

Yeah! Let's do this!

The two chased down the monster, while Terry kept trying to shoot its head. Unsurprisingly, it avoided all their attacks, but as soon as it

reached one of those crystal mushrooms, it placed one arm on it while trying to fend off the trio.

It was unclear what it was trying to do, but they would never find out, as Lydia hit the creature on its head with her axe hard enough to defeat it for good.

They would've expected it to just be knocked down, but as Lydia hit it, an enormous puff of smoke came from it, only to leave a regular trash can in its place.

Well, um… Hey, at least we won't have to deal with it anymore!

Daw… I wanted to see what it was going to do…

Phew… It's finally over.

This is exactly why I didn't want to involve you with this, you crybaby.

I'm not a crybaby!!!!

While Clara and Lydia keep arguing, Terry notices something's wrong with the mushroom, the one the creature laid its plastic bag look alike.

Ladies? I think I know what it was trying to do.
Look at this.

Maybe I shouldn’t have hit it like that…

The mushroom's falling apart, huh?

Slowly but surely it is, but now the thing is gone so we'll have to come up with something of our own.

Do you think you can somehow recreate that thing's arm?

I'd love to, but I don't know what it was made of, and even if I did, I have nothing to work with.

Well, that's a problem for another day, we have to rebuild this place from the ground up; it could fall apart any moment now… I said, It could fall apart any moment now!
…Nevermind.

Um, boss? Don't you think it's a little late for that?

Do you think we have a place to sleep in?

Well, I mean, there's still beds in the houses...

And right as she says that a piece of rooftop collapses, scaring the trio.

I guess that's not an option then…

Even after the fight, there was one thing that Terry just couldn't get out of his mind; just what was that rocket thing back in the forest? It looked an awful lot like something the Hoodsters would build, but nobody was in it so what's the deal? He decides to go back to it, to hopefully get a better look at it this time around.

Unsurprisingly, it was still there, though it stopped fuming like it did before. He looked all around it, even inside, but he just couldn't find anything, he thought that maybe Clara would know since she has more experience with Hoodster stuff.

As soon as he’s about to try to lift it, he hears something moving from behind the bushes. He looks around to see what it is, only to find nothing. He then turns back again to the rocket again, however the whole thing disappeared! With no trace left of it, he goes back to town, wondering whatever it could’ve been.

The trio worked tirelessly all night long to try and give the town a temporary fix, to make it more stable so that it could be inhabitable for the time being.

Hey boss!
Boss? Oh, she passed out…

What an unforeseen event.
Who would've thought.

Maybe we didn't do enough to help her…

No, she just overworked herself like usual, just like you love to do so much.

embarrassed
Daww…

Sigh… Come on now…

Anyway…We can't just let her sleep like that on the ground.
I'll make something for her to lie on, you can go rest!

You'll probably just end up sleeping too.

Excuse me!?

Back to the present…

Alright, you told me enough, just get to the end!

If you let me finish!

Ugh… you're so lame.
Whatever, I know what happened to you, but what about the other two?
Y'know, the crybaby and the other guy.

Oh, them? I'll just call them here.

She then shouts their names, so they quickly run towards her.

What is it boss?

I was just talking about you two-

Woah, why are you so large?!

Sigh… here we go again.

Boss, who is this guy?

It's the new recruit, we found him after the… uh… encounter with the MPC members.

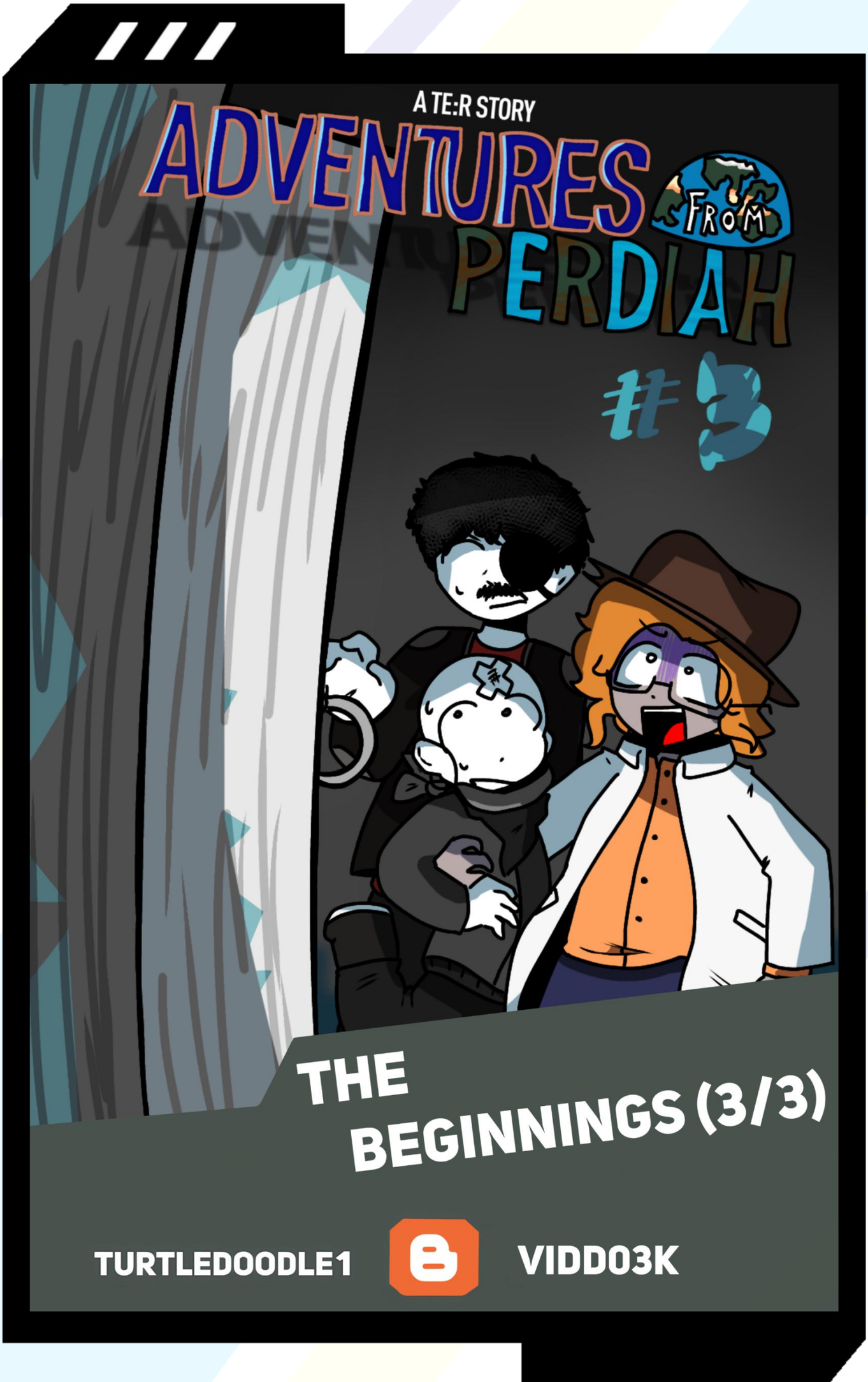
Ooohhh, I see.
And why is he already bullying Terry?

Before Clara could reply, however, they heard a message coming from a set of speakers.

“Clara Spades, please come to the Throne room, we need to talk about our plans.”

Oh, guess duty’s calling. I'll see you guys later, don't break anything.

She then makes her way to the Throne room, where her Queen awaits her. She didn't know whether it was anything important or not, but she was happy to be called by her, nevertheless.


A TE:R STORY
ADVENTURES FROM PERDIAH
#3
THE BEGINNINGS (3/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K

THE BEGINNINGS (3/3)

“Every story has its beginning. Some are happy, some are sad and some… some are quite interesting.”

It was a strange day on Planet Perdiah. After their defeat at the hands of Team Bushra and Array, the Rascals were all in a bad mood. Some took it far better than others though. They had to get back to mainland to plan their next move. After a few hours of travelling, they came across The Mountain That Never Ends. Markus found the name unnecessarily long but rolled with it. There was no other path to use besides this mountain. Despite all the rumors surrounding the mountain, Markus told Murray to continue driving.

When will we arrive at the mainland, Murray?

According to my calculations… in about 2 hours.

Good.
* grunts *
The sooner we get out of this place, the better.

So… what’s our plan now, sir?
Are we going to find another temple or-

No.
We are not.

Aww why not, bossy wossy?

Ya’ still upset over the fight?

I don’t think it’s the right time to ask that, Joyce-

“Why not”, she asks...

Markus starts laughing to himself and the two start worrying. Suddenly, Markus hits the side of the truck with brute force which makes Murray stop the truck with fear in his eyes.

We literally lost to a group of children!
Do you know how insulting that is?!

S- sorry, boss…

First, we lose to the blonde kid.
Then, we lose to him AND his clubhouse gang!

* fixes her glasses *
Erm… actually, the hot red man was there too.

So, what?!
Is that suppose to make me feel better or something?!
That freak used us as his… ugh… “puppets” for his own benefit.
No way I’m dealing with that guy again.

I think Joyce is trying to say we could have beaten those three if not for his meddling.

Pixel brain’s right for once.

Hnrgh… talking to you two is a waste of time!
* sits back down *
Continue driving, Murray.
This place is driving me crazy already!

R- right away, boss.

The three continued their trip for another few hours. Markus was starting to run out of patience.

Murray, you said we were going to be there in 2 hours!

Sorry, sir.
I didn’t account for this mountain’s looping capabilities…

Uhm… in English?

…we might be going in circles.

* snorts*
Well, isn’t that just great?

Not to mention-

Before Murray could show Markus what was wrong, Murray takes a

hard turn to the right and stops the truck in an instant. Markus was able to hold onto the bars but Joyce wasn't so lucky.

Hey, what was that all about?!

* holding her head *
Ah will rip out ya' non-existent hair, ya' little-

Before Joyce could finish her sentence, the other two notice what Murray was referring to. A giant crystal was blocking their path back to the mainland. But it wasn't like the one they encountered all those days ago. This one was glowing, like it was… activated by something.

This… might be a problem.
You sure, you can't drive through this, Murray?

Well… we could try to explode our way to the other side but I'm not sure if the mountain is stable enough.

It literally has a giant crystal sticking out of it, remember?
Ah'm sure a few explosions won't do it any harm!
Murray
…perhaps.
* gets out of the truck and readies his bombs *
Alright, let's see it.

The three suddenly hear the sound of a lightning strike. Not too long after, heavy rain began.

Well, so much for that plan.

* looks at his wet bomb in sadness *
What do we do now, sir?

Markus wanted nothing to do with this place any longer. The constant bickering of the other two was already bad enough. But he also knew how dangerous the road would be with the storm on the horizon. He took a deep breath and sighed afterwards. He already regretted his decision.

It’s decided.
We are going to rest somewhere safe for the night.
But the second the sun arrives, we are outta’ here!
* points at Murray *
Murray, did you see any type of opening on our way here?

Well, yes. I did.
It was a few miles back… or a few miles ahead?
This place is confusing as it is.

Forget about the complex mumbo jumbo, just take us there!

* sits back on the drivers seat *
Right away, sir!

Flashcut to half an hour later, Joyce and Markus were preparing their stuff to rest while Murray was still busy building a small wall to protect themselves from the storm outside.

Gotta hand it to you, Murray.
That was some quick thinking back there!

* hammers the final nail *

Heh… thanks, sir.

Ah could have done it too, ya know?

(sarcasm) Yeah, yeah. We know.
* yawns *
Next time, let’s see you do it!

Oh, ah will do it, alright!

* chuckles but yawns once again *
Alright, it’s sleep time.
Don’t forget to wake up early for tomorrow you two.
Hopefully, we will be out of this dump soon.
Joyce
Good idea, boss man!

Joyce took off her hat and glasses and proceeded to rest. The second she laid down, she instantly fell asleep and started snoring very loudly. Markus looked at the still awake Murray and chuckled.

Never get tired of that.
Good luck trying to sleep with that on.

Yeah, yeah, I know…
Goodnight, sir.

Goodnight to you as well, Murray.

And so, the Rascals went to sleep. Nothing too eventful has happened for the few passing hours aside from the still awake

Murray thinking to himself. It had been so long since he could rest like this. "Why am I still doing this?", he thought. Since the day he joined Hood, all he wanted was to live in peace. And serving Hood at his own pace felt like the best thing he could have done. Even though he knew that Hood had terrible plans for Perdiah, he still thought he was doing the smart thing... at the time. Now however, he really regretted that decision. After the Xtress war, he didn't know what to do. It was either handing himself over to MPC or... running away from the inevitable. Because why would they show him any mercy after everything that has happened?! It just felt like an impossibility to him.

He was shocked to find out that the blonde kid he met the other day was hanging out with MPC2 members. If a loner like him could get accepted by MPC2... why not him? At the same time, he didn't want to leave Markus' side. Despite everything, he was very nice and kind to him after all. And Joyce was... well, Joyce. He was unsure on what to do so he decided to close his eyes and try to sleep. But it didn't take too long to notice that something was off about this cave. A light started covering Murray's face which made him wake up and start looking around.

Whuzzuh…
* covers his eyes *
Is that you, Joyce?
Are you pulling that prank on me again?!

No response. Murray was confused and got up to see what was causing the lights. But when he saw the source of the light, Murray was appalled.

Uh… boss?
You might want to check this out1

Urgh…
* clears his eyes *
What is it, Murray?
This better be something worthwhile-

Murray never saw his boss this shocked before. He looked like he was questioning everything about his life.

Murray.
W-wake up, Joyce.
Now.

Right away.

While Murray went to wake Joyce up, Markus was standing there, still not sure if this was reality.

* shakes her *
Wake up, Joyce!

Wha-
* reaches out to her pockets to ready herself for an attack *
Where am I?! Who are you?!
Of course orange is my natural hair color!

…

Oh, right.

Joyce started looking for her glasses and then got up. She looked at what the other two were babbling about only to see a glowing grey door in front of them.

Woah, what is that?

So the myths were true after all!

What myths, sir?

I read a book about Perdiah's strange myths during our time with Hood.
It was written by someone under the name "S. Carlos".
* points at the door *
This right here was one of those myths.
It was rumored that this rare door led to a place called “The Pocket Zone.”
I never thought I would live to see this with my own two eyes.

Fascinating!

Looks cool though it looks... magical. Blegh!

What’s wrong with magic?
Don't you use it to create your potions?

Not at all, twerp.
All my potions are carefully hand crafted by yours truly!
There's no magiky substance in any of them.

Uh huh…

Are you two quite finished?

Yes, sir.

Don’t look at me, he started it!

Whatever.
According to the book, this “Pocket Dimension” leads to a bunch of pocket zones which, in turn, unlocks passages to more pocket zones!

Take a shot everytime you say “pocket”.

Shut up.

So… do we take a peek inside?

We don’t know what exactly is on the other side of the door.
It may be too risky.

* cracks her knuckles *
Ah say we take the risk and go for it!
What could possibly go wrong?

We could never leave from there for one thing-

Pfft.
Ya’ such a joykill.

Murray does have a point, Joyce.
We can’t afford to take another hit… not this soon.

Joyce frowns and watches as the other two go back to bed. She couldn’t believe the two were willing to give up so fast. Who knew what was on the other side of this door. There could have been new materials in there to create more potions for herself… She couldn’t resist the temptation.

Ya’ know what?
If ya’ bozos want to be lame, so be it!
Ah’m going to the other side!

Joyce, don’t-

Before Markus could talk her out of it, she was already gone.

Curse that Joyce!

* gets up from his bed again *
S- sir, what happened?!

Joyce went inside without my command!

Wha- what are we gonna do, sir?

What do you think?!
* grabs Murray by the sweater *
We are going after her!

R-right!

Murray looks at the door and gulps. There was no going back.

Ready for this?

Not at all.

Exactly what I wanted to hear.

“Let’s see what’s on the other side!”

After stepping into the door, everything went blank. Markus thought this truly was the end. Until…

Boss, boss, wake up!

Urgh… what?
Where are we, Murray?

I don’t know…

Murray helps Markus get up and both of them start looking around. They were inside some sort of white colored cube shaped room. Definitely not Markus was expecting to see here.

What in the world…
Murray, did you explore this place before waking me up?

Nope, sir.
I didn’t want to leave you alone.

Thanks for your loyalty, little one.
* looks behind him *
What happened to the door we came from?

I think it automatically closed behind us.

It must be one way passage…

Seems like it.
Guess we will have to find another way to get out of here.

(Thanks for that, Joyce.)
Well, I guess we should explore instead while we got the chance.

Of course.

The two walked straight for what felt like eternity until they found a locked door. It was a grey door, just like the one they came from, except this one was broken apart.

Sir, I think-

Joyce has already been here?
Yeah, I figured.
If we hurry, we might catch up with her!

I hope so…

Meanwhile; Joyce was having the time of her life, running through so many different pocket zones and collecting materials she never saw on Perdiah before for her future potions. She encountered a zone full of water, another one which was just a big jungle. She found those two pretty boring but the rest of the zones she travelled were amazing. She was surprised to find most of the doors were already open by the time she entered the Pocket Dimension. Like someone had already been here. She was still pissed that the rest of her team were such cowards though. This place was amazing! She was so excited to brag about her findings to them when she got back. For now though, she just wanted to continue having fun. Before she entered the next zone, she noticed another door on the other side of the passage. It had a different appearance compared to all the other doors she saw. It was fully black door with vines covering some parts of it. She decided to take a peek inside for the possibility of finding more rare materials.

When she first entered the zone, she was pretty confused. This just looked like an ordinary zone like the rest of the zones she previously entered. It was a pretty standard swamp with nothing too out of ordinary. But something was still off. It was pretty quiet … a little TOO quiet. She walked around a bit and then started collecting. There were so many interesting materials in here; new type of flowers, acorns and so much more. She wasn't even sure her potion bag would be enough to carry all of these back. She got up and shook a nearby tree for new types of fruit. Instead, a crow jumped out of it and started attacking Joyce. But she was able to defend herself easily. She shooed the crow away and then continued her collecting. Little did she know that an unknown figure was watching her from the shadows this whole time.

How peculiar…
(Another visitor after such a long time…)

The crow that just attacked Joyce lands next to the mysterious figure.

Hello Loi.
* smiles *
I hope you gave our guest a warm welcome.

The mysterious figure shapeshifted into a crow herself and then flew alongside Loi to continue watching Joyce as she cluelessly continued collecting new materials. After she was done, Joyce started looking for the exit of the zone. But when she got to the other side of the zone, she noticed something very unusual. The exit door… was not there. Joyce was rightfully confused, the other zones always had a door on the other side of them. To not panic, she took a deep breath and went back to her tracks. Something fishy was going on here.

Joyce looked all over the place, just to find some sort of clue on getting out of here. But then suddenly, she stopped in her tracks and looked next to her. She never explored the swamp waters. She didn't care about getting dirty but she obviously didn't want to deal with the consequences. She sat on top of a nearby rock and started brewing a new potion. The mysterious figure was fascinated by Joyce's skills. She continued keeping an eye on Joyce.

After the potion was done, Joyce got up and threw the potion beneath her boots. The boots started glowing pink. The mysterious figure was confused but intrigued about this revelation. Joyce walked towards the water and then smirked when she was able to walk on water. She put her arms on her back to relax and continued exploring the zone.

(Fascinating… is she… another magic user like me?)

Joyce suddenly looks behind her and notices the shadow figure disappear for a split second. Joyce was starting to worry but for real this time. "What WAS that thing?!", she thought to herself. She tried to trick herself into thinking she just imagined things and continued her trip.

After a while, Joyce noticed a small tree house in the middle of the swamp. She was now confused. Why was there a hut in this zone? There shouldn't have been any men-made structures in any of the

zones… unless…

Joyce suddenly hears a creaking sound behind her and threw her stun potion at it. Only to realize that it was just a frog, now stunned.

Oh… phew.
Dunno what came over me.
* looks at the frog again *
Stay on your line, bucko.
Ya scared the crap outta me!

No response from the frog, as she expected. She chuckled and continued walking towards the house. It was just a dumb zone, nothing in here could possibly hurt her! And even if they tried, she could always show them who's boss.

And there it was, the house she have been looking for. She looked at the stairs and thought they were lame so she quicky picked up a high jump potion and used it on herself. Why bother, she thought. Instead of knocking on the wooden door, she slammed the door wide open. When she entered, she noticed a bunch of bookshelves alongside demonic symbols written on the walls. Joyce was starting to worry once again but she kept quiet. In the mist of all those symbols however, there was a small school bag and a bed alongside it.

Joyce was getting really spooked from the place so she decided to leave the place. Suddenly, she heard creaking sounds from outside the house and rushed quickly to the door to close it shut.

Ah- ah'm warning ya, creep!
If ya take a step inside, ya'll regret it!

Joyce suddenly feels someone holding her from the shoulders.

No such need.

Joyce quickly threw a potion at the figure but the figure blocked it and threw Joyce out of the house. After the hit, Joyce quickly shook

her head and got up to fight the beast. The figure fully revealed herself to the ever so confused Joyce. The figure was a lady wearing a green dress with a bunch of cards spinning around her.

Oh, great.
Another magic user.
(sarcasm) Can’t get enough of those…

Hello there.
* petting her crow *
Pardon my manners, I just don’t appreciate people barging into my house without permission.

Manners, eh?
* picks up a bunch of potions from her bag *
Want to see how much ah care about “manners”?

I would rather not.
* lets her crow go and smiles *
But if you insist.

Joyce throws a stun potion at the mysterious figure but she dodges it in a flash and throws a card at Joyce in return. Joyce was barely able to dodge the card and took a few steps back.

Ah must say… very impressed by ya’ magic moves, lady.
Too bad it pales in comparison to my potions.

Big talk for the one retreating.

Think about it this way, in MY perspective, ya' the one who's retreat-

The figure suddenly threw a card at Joyce and Joyce also dodges it at the last second.

D- didn't really like that joke, eh?

No response.

Yeah, me neither.
Ah'll talk more details when ah beat ya into oblivion!

Now it was Joyce's turn to be on the offensive. She started throwing potions at the figure but she was too fast. All of her dodging was from sheer luck. She had to do coming drastic… fast! Joyce threw a potion next to her and a fire shield covers around her. She could now plan things out. She noticed the figure being frustrated by her and laughed at her in return. But suddenly, the figure dashed away from her and started throwing cards around the shield. Joyce didn't understand what the figure was trying to do but even she was aware that it was bad news. Before Joyce could process what was going on, a dark blast started appearing from the area the figure planted as Joyce tried to keep her shield up. But… it wasn't strong enough. The dark blast started hurting her from very angle. The figure took advantage of the situation and threw a card at Joyce which paralyzed her. "I hate karma.", Joyce thought to herself.

Now, are you willing to talk?

…

Very well.
My name is Marigold.
Yours?

…Joyce.
Joyce Folio.

What an interesting little name.
* points her finger at Joyce and starts moving her paralyzed body at her will *
Now, let’s continue our talk in somewhere more… magical.

Joyce didn’t respond. She was thinking of what to do in this situation. How could she ever escape from this lady… she needed to stall for time.

While on their way to the unknown, Marigold started humming a little tune all by herself. “Gosh, ah wish ah could punch her on the face.”, Joyce thought. After a while, they stopped their journey inside a nearby cave. Joyce didn’t see this cave before. Did the witch purposefully hide this place from outsiders, who knew at that point.

Welcome to my little playground.

Eh?

* smiles *
I practice my magic in here!
It’s so fun!

Marigold notices Joyce not paying attention to her so she pulls out another card and throws it to her dried up fireplace. Joyce still

wasn't interested. Marigold sits next to the fireplace. Joyce knew she had to appease the witch's interests in order to have a shot at escaping.

Now… what's your deal, "Joy-see"?

It's spelled Joyce.
Say it right.

Alright then, "Joyce".
Can you answer my question?

Hm… maybe.
But two can play at that game!

What are you implying here?

We can ask each other questions instead!
Like a… (ugh), pyjama party!

* her eyes widen *
Really?

Yeah, why not, amiright?

In response, Marigold starts chanting a spell as Joyce closed her eyes and braced herself for an attack. But… nothing happened. She opened her eyes only to see that both she and Marigold were now

wearing pyjamas. As much as he hated admitting it, it was actually kinda comfortable.

NOW, we can start!
Can I go first?!

Uhh… sure?

Awesome!
So…
* points at Joyce's potion bag *
What kind of magic is that?

Oh, my potions?
No no, they really aren't magic.
Ah brew them on my own.

No… I'm pretty sure they are magic.

Look lady, ah'm the one who makes the potions, not ya!

Marigold makes a fist and suffocates Joyce a tiny bit.

Don't forget your place, Joyce.

Joyce nods her head and Marigold stops making a fist. She watches as Joyce tries to catch her breath.

So… what would you like to ask me?

* coughs *
Well… why are ya here in the first place?!

Joyce notices Marigold becoming noticeably sad after her question. Joyce prepared herself for another attack but instead, actually got an answer.

I… I don’t remember the exact details.
When I was a little girl, I went to explore Cave Inertia with my friends.
They were never too fond of me but we were still friends despite that.
We went there because of a bet and it was so much fun!
We decided to rest there before our parents found out what we were up to.
But then, we saw a glowing door in the middle of our rest place.
One of our friends woke us up and we talked about going inside.
But as it turned out… they really didn’t like me.
They kicked me inside while I wasn’t paying attention and didn’t followed behind me.

Oof, bummer.

…
Then I came across this place and did the biggest mistake of my life.
There was another person waiting inside and they told me they were dying.
They were oddly silent afterwards but I didn’t mind it.
I helped them walk towards the door and then opened the door for them to get out.
But little did I know, they tricked me.
When I tried to exit the place, the door didn’t allow me to get out.

None of the other zones I went through had something like this.
I cried and screamed for help hoping anyone could hear my voice.
I explored every inch of the place I now called “home” and found relics saying that this place needed one person to stay in it.
And now, I was the said “one person”.
I can only begin to imagine how mom, dad and my little brother are doing…

Hm…
So ya got one of em’ “tragic” backstories, eh?

Grr… you could say that.
There’s more to my story but-

BORINGGGG!
* yawns *
Can you ask me another question instead?

…sure.

Marigold notices her pet crow arriving at the cave and waves at him.

That wretch is your property?

“Property”?
Did people become ruder since I left or what?

…

But yeah, he’s my friend.
A loyal one at that!
* looks at her crow *
Anyways, were you suppose to tell me something?

The crow nods. Marigold listened to a series of loud caws while Joyce thought she was coo coo crazy.

Oh my.
This is interesting!

What is it, gruesome?

Apparently new visitors have arrived!
And…

She listens to Loi again and looks back at Joyce.

They are apparently looking for someone called “Joyce”.

Joyce was horrified. “What were they even doing here?!”, she thought. She thought they were just preparing for tomorrow. But Marigold was smiling from cheek to cheek.

Look at how the tables have turned!

…

Marigold snapped her fingers as both got back their usual outfits.

Things just got a lot more interesting…

“Let’s pay your crew a visit, shall we?”

Murray, you sure she was here?

Pretty sure.
The door was half open when we first found it.

Let’s just hope she isn’t too far away…

The other two Rascals have been looking for Joyce ever since they entered the Pocket Dimension. Some of the zones they went through were pretty easy to get through while some were pretty difficult to manage. They were able to keep track of Joyce’s whereabouts by the missing materials in the zones. And her tracks lead to here.

Meanwhile, Marigold and the still paralyzed Joyce were watching the two from the shadows. Joyce tried to scream but every time she tried, Marigold suffocated her more and more.

You get the feeling something’s… off about this place?

A-a little bit.

Glad I’m not the only one.
* clears his throat *
Let’s check the other side!

Right away, sir!

The two also realized the lack of a door in this zone and started panicking.

S-sir?

Yes, Murray?

You are seeing what I am seeing, right?

Unfortunately so.
Does this mean…
* quickly looks around *
…Joyce might still be in here?

Maybe?
I feel like we would have heard from her by now though.

You are right… maybe she found a way to get out of this place.
(And we are the dumb ones.)

Perhaps… I just hope she’s okay…
Even though she hates my guts, it wouldn’t be right without her.

* smiles *
Don’t worry Murray, we’ll find her eventually.
You are right about that though.

As much as I hate her company sometimes… she's a pretty valuable member of the crew.
But now, let's focus on finding a way out of here, alright?

O- okay…

Maybe we might find her in here after all!

Yeah!

Marigold overhears the entire conversation and waits there all silent until they were out of sight much to Joyce's surprise.

They seem… oddly worried for you.

Yeah, what of it?

And the bald one said you were a bully to him…

Uh…

For years on end, I thought I was the problem.
But… maybe it was them!
Even worse, if I ever managed to get out of here, I could never start over!
* holds her head *
They care about you so much and you don't even notice…
You have so much to look forward but yet…

Hello, is this thing working?!
Did ya even listen to what ah just said?

Joyce was going to continue rambling until she noticed Marigold smiling once again. But this time, it was different. She had so much resentment towards Joyce in her eyes.

You know what, Joyce?
I don't think you deserve to go back with them.

Excuse you?

They care about you so much, they consider you a part of their team.
And you just… don't care.
You waste your life.
So…

Before Joyce could understand what Marigold was talking about, Marigold starts casting a spell which covers her with purple smoke. When the smokes were cleared, Joyce was confused but also shocked. There she was… Joyce herself staring back at another Joyce in front of her. She was too shocked to say anything as the "Fake Joyce" took her hat and put it on her own head.

I hope you wouldn't mind me taking over your place for until forever.

You slimy little-

Don't mention it.

I have full control over the zone's exit!
You can stay here in my place while I can enjoy the life you never appreciated!
Isn't that just great?!

You are the biggest clown on Perdiah if ya think they will be fooled that easily!

Oh, trust me… they will.
Since you never really liked them, they will appreciate my "kinder" personality compared to yours.
* starts jumping all around in happiness *
I can't believe I'm finally getting out of this dump!
And with actual friends by my side!
This is gonna be so much fun!

When ah get my hands on ya, ya will be sorry ya messed with me!

Keep dreaming, Joyce.
Or should I say… past Joyce?

Joyce was fuming from anger. She tried to move her body to attack her fake self but the spell was too strong. Marigold points at Joyce and makes her slam to the wall. Joyce was unconscious after the fact.

I wish there was a better way to do this, Joyce… but I can't trust anyone on this.
Not again after **last time.**

Loi suddenly arrives at the scene and lands at Marigold's left arm.

Sorry Loi but I can’t let you come with me.
They will notice that something’s up.
I won’t forget our time together…
* pets him *
I’m gonna miss you too…

Marigold lets him go and waves him one last goodbye. Afterwards, she picks up Joyce’s potion bag and then hits herself very hard with a stick to make it seem like she escaped from “an evil witch”.

AAHHH!

T-that sounded like Joyce!

Really?!
Where did it come from?

* points at his right *
This way!

The two followed the screams and saw a limping Joyce trying to walk towards them.

JOYCE!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
WHAT HAPPENED?!

A-an evil witch tried to hunt me down but I managed to lose my tracks!
My limbs are just a bit hurt.
That’s all.

What did I tell you about rushing into things all by yourself?!

I’m… sorry.

E-excuse me?
You are… what?

Yeah… after trying to survive in here all by myself for so long, I… realized that I was at fault.
Sorry… Murray.

Uhm… I’m Murray?

Oh… right.
I meant, sorry Markus.

Well, I don’t know what you experienced out here but I’m happy to see a positive change for your character!
Welcome back to the fray, Joyce!

* smiles *
Thanks boss, it’s great to be back!

Markus continues looking around.

With that said though, I think we should get out of here already if that witch was still hunting you down!

R- right, boss!
We should head on out of here!
I missed the outside world so much!

While Marigold thought the plan was going perfectly, she didn't account for one thing. Murray. From the moment he saw her, he thought something was off. Pleading for help? Not the passive aggressive tone? No bragging from her end? Something was wrong but he wasn't exactly sure what. He took a breath and thought to himself that maybe it really was just Joyce showing vulnerability for once. He decided to make his full judgement on "Joyce" later.

...so we couldn't find the door and we thought you were still inside.

And you two were right on the money with that theory!

So while you were here, did you find any type of clue on how we can get out?

I think I got it…

Marigold pretends to create some sort of potion and then throws it to the ground which makes the red door appear.

Woah, how did you do that?

When I was messing around with new materials, I figured out how to create an exit door!

Then why didn’t you go explore other zones?

The witch got to me before I could do so and then I found you guys!

Uh huh…

No more messing around you two.
She could appear at any second!
Don’t waste this chance!

Right away, sir!

Markus enters the door but before Marigold also did so, she noticed Murray still looking back at the zone.

Come on, Murray!
We gotta go!

Murray didn’t say anything but decided to follow the two from behind. Just as they thought the trouble was over, everything went completely blank once again.

S- sir, wake up!

What…
Where are we, Murray?

We are finally outside, sir!

We… we are out?

Yes, sir!
But we are not inside the cave anymore, I think it teleported us to the mainlands.

* takes a breath out of relief *
That’s good…
Is Joyce doing alright?

Yeah, she is…
But I’m not sure if she’s still “herself”.

Marigold couldn’t believe she was finally out of the pocket dimeon after so many years. But not only that, she now had two loyal friends. She had to hold herself from crying out of happiness. Since Joyce’s main weapon was using potions to attack, she could transform her cards into potions so she could keep up the disguise. Everything was going perfectly! She looked back at the other two helping each other get up.

So, what do you guys wanna do now?!

* smiles *
I don’t know Joyce but we will do it together as a team!

* chuckles *

You are dang right!

Right, Murray?

…

Murray?

R- right, boss.

“And so, the Rascals were right back on schedule! Going on adventures, having fun and most importantly… my journey finally began.”

A TE:R STORY
ADVENTURES FROM PERDIAH
THIS IS MY BOOK NOW!!
JOYCE'S QUEST (1/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K

JOYCE'S QUEST (1/3)

Ugh! Open ya' stupid door!
* Punches the door *
GAH!

Day 3. It has been 3 days since she got trapped in this pocket zone. It was difficult to tell how fast time moved in this place because of the lack of an actual sun. Joyce was roaming around the pocket zone, hoping for something that could get her out of this living nightmare. She used all her potions on the door but none of them could even make a dent on it. She was going to keep looking for new materials for a new potion to help her get out of this place, but she decided to rest under a tree for now. That punch did a real number on her fist.

Sigh... another day, another Pertoken.
* yawns *
Ah swear, if ah got mah hands on that twat, I'm going to-

Loi lands on top of Joyce's hair and starts biting it.

OW, OW!
LET GO OF THE HAIR, YOU VERMIN!
GAH!

After flapping her arms around, Loi left her alone and landed on a branch of a nearby tree.

Ya' just as annoying as ya' owner.
Ya' know that?

Loi nodded in response.

Peh, glad we could agree on one thing at least.

Joyce got up and cracked her knuckles.

Screw waiting around, this thing isn't going to get destroyed by itself!
* Looks at Loi *
If ya' dare attack me while ah'm working, ya' will lose a wing.
Or ya' claw, your pick.

Loi turned his back around.

* chuckles *
That's what ah thought.

Joyce shoos Loi away and leans to grab her hat...

Oh... right.
The witch took it.
* coughs *
Well, no matter now.
All ah need is a ticket outta' here.

"And when ah'm out, that witch is gonna to pay for what she did."

Back on Planet Perdiah, the Rascals were on their way to find another temple. Since they lost their truck back in The Mountain That Never Ends, they were now going on foot.

Wow, what a fantastic day to spend time with my crew...
* frowns *
Or it would be if we had something to drive!

Sorry boss, I don’t have enough parts to make a vehicle that can carry us three.

Ooh!
* Covers her mouth with her hand *
You can make vehicles... just like that?

Um... yes?
I literally built a truck right in front of you just a few days ago.

Oh... right!
What I meant to say was... horrid job, Murray!
Just get on with it already!

Classic Joyce.

Yes, sir!

Uh huh... alright then.

The crew encountered another giant crystal blocking their path. They originally encountered these things near The Mountain That Neverends but now, they were everywhere.

This is seriously so bizarre.
What’s causing these crystals to show up?!
You would think those goodie two shoes would stop these from happening already.

The who now?

Oh, you know.
Sarpo, his cat girlfriend, the bald one and the fish guy.

Oh yeah... those guys.
They sure packed a punch, huh?

You could say that.
I wouldn’t really consider that “fun” though.
In fact, it was a real stinker.
Not as bad as the time that blonde bastard beat us though, WE SHOULD HAVE KICKED HIS A-

Uh... boss?

* Coughs *
Pardon my outburst, Murray.
What is it?

Um...

Murray points at a direction and Markus notices a person running away from them. It looked like there were... crystals? Popping out of their body.

What on Perdiah was that?!

I-I don’t know, boss.
Maybe they have something to do with these crystal pillars.

Maybe he is right!

Then we must catch them!
Get running you two!

“We are getting our answers whether they like it or not!”

Meanwhile, Joyce was standing in front of the door while she was in the process of brewing a new potion. Loi was also watching her from a close.

Don’t ya dare open your beak.
Ah found a new type of moss near the swamp.
Hopefully this does the trick!

Joyce drops the final piece of the moss to the potion and a new type of smoke comes out of the potion.

Bingo.
* Closes the potion with a cap *
Now, let’s see what this bad boy can do!

Joyce shakes the potion and throws it towards the door at full force. She waited for some sort of reaction from the door, but nothing happened.

GAH!
USELESS POTION!

AH THOUGHT AH HAD IT THIS TIME!

Joyce didn't have the strength to look back at Loi. She knew he was very entertained by all of this. She tried something she never thought of trying before. Taking a deep sigh.

* Takes a deep breath *
Simme' down, girl.
Show 'em who's the smarter scientist!

Joyce started looking around for more materials in unorthodox places. Under some stones, mushroom growing next to the tree stumps and more. She looked inside Marigold's old house to see if she had anything special hiding in her inventory. She found a new type of flower inside a chest she never saw before in these areas. Maybe this was the key to get out of here all along!

It wasn't.

She tried, repeatedly with seemingly no process. Joyce was getting real sick of this. She started walking back to the house while talking to herself.

What kind of sick maniac designed this place?!
Why would ya' even need to keep one person stuck in here?!
GRR... Ah wonder what more ah can put into this thing... blue petals from Sarasaland?
No, that won't work.
Ah just have to-

Joyce suddenly bumps into a scarecrow and holds her head.

GAH!
AH HATE THS STUPID SCARECROW!
Scared the ever-living heck outta me!

But then, Joyce realizes something.

Wait a gosh dang second.

Joyce walks slowly to the scarecrow and touches it.

Yes... YES!
Ah was going about this the wrong way!
Ah can’t get out of this place by destroying the door!
That’s what the witch tried.

Joyce looks at the scarecrow again and smiles.

Of course!

“Ah just need to redirect mah curse onto… something else.”

Run faster, you two!

I’m trying, boss!

Me too!

We could have caught up with the guy already if we just had a darn vehicle!

I know, I know.
Sorry boss, I just didn’t-
* Notices something *

Sir, get down!

What are you waffling about-

A laser barely misses Markus, and he stops in his tracks with a shocked look on his face.

How dare you?! That does it!
* Reaches out for his crossbow *
We aren’t letting this man get away from **the Rascals!**
Catch up with him while I slow him down!

ON IT!

The two looked at each other with totally different expressions.

Woah, we both said that at the same time!
That’s so cool!

J-Joyce, I don’t know what’s gotten into you!
You have been acting strange since we rescued you!

...

Why are you acting like this-

More running, less talking!
I’m losing him!

We should finish the mission first!

R-right!

Murray looked at Joyce one more time and fully concentrated on the mission. He could notice the figure trying to dodge the arrows from a distance. Murray threw a bomb towards the figure, but they noticed the oncoming bomb and shot a laser towards it. The bomb fell to the ground like a rock and defused. That tactic wasn't going to work. Meanwhile, Joyce pulled out a small card, turned it into a potion and threw it towards the figure. The potion created a large pool of bubblegum which kept the figure in place. It didn't take too long for the figure to get out of it however as they shot another laser towards the bubblegum, turning it into crystal.

This isn't working!

We should try a different tactic!
Take my hand!

O-okay!
* Holds her hand *
What are you going to do?

I'm going to do...
* Puts a card behind his back without him noticing *
...THIS!

Joyce throws Murray towards the figure in full force and Murray punches them on the chest. The added knockback Joyce's card had knocked the figure back towards the tree and makes them go unconscious.

WOO-HOO!
I DID IT!

Markus ran towards Murray to help him get up but quickly notices the figure charging a laser towards Murray.

MURRAY, GET DOWN!

W-what-

NO!

Joyce couldn’t help but quickly throw a card towards the figure’s blaster, causing it to turn into ash. She hoped either of the two didn’t notice.

(confused) What happened to your blaster-

Before the figure could respond, Markus kicks him on the chest and then pushes them to the ground. Now was the time for them to get some answers.

Speak, you crystal abomination!
Who sent you and what is the deal with these crystals?!

...

Yeah!
Answer the boss, you jerk!

...

Markus pushes the figure towards the ground even more. He was going to have some answers, no matter what.

SPEAK!

...I don’t have to say anything.
This is just the beginning of her reign.

Who’s... “her”?

The person who will shape the future of Perdiah!
You will see what she’s fully capable of... very soon!

Stop being cryptic and talk, dang it!

I’m afraid I can’t do that.

Why not?

The figure chuckles.

You might want to look in front of you.

The Rascals look in front of them and notice a whole horde of

people with the same crystal attachments on their bodies.

It was time to run away.

And that should be the last of it!

Joyce drops the final material left to be added to the potion, a small flower petal. The newer potions were now made with “redirecting” in mind instead of “giant explosion”. Joyce already had a few failed attempts with this new technique, but she was really hoping it would pay off sooner than later. The scarecrow was already damaged from all the failed potions.

* Takes a breath *
Alright, here we go.

Joyce looks at her potion one last time and threw it at the scarecrow, eagerly waiting for it to show affects. A short time later, a bunch of black goo started leaking out of the scarecrow itself. Joyce was confused, this wasn’t how any of her potions looked. Suddenly, the whole pocket dimension started shaking like an earthquake was happening. Joyce knew she did something, but she wasn’t exactly sure what she did.

WOO HOO!
AH DID IT!
TAKE THAT, YA’ STINKY OLD PLACE!

While she was celebrating, she noticed Loi freaking out over the distance but didn’t pay attention to him. Unfortunately for Joyce however, the entire zone was leaking out that black goo from each side of it. At this rate, she was going to drown in the goo. Joyce quickly rushed towards the door, hoping the zone falling apart caused it to open. Loi was following behind her. When she arrived there, she noticed an entrance just big enough for her to fit. She went pass the entrance but then quickly noticed that it wasn’t just the

pocket dimension that was falling apart. The entire pocket dimension was falling apart! There was nothing to stand on top of past the entrance. She looked behind her and realized she had two options left. Drown in the zone or jump into the endless void beneath her. Loi landed on her shoulder just before she could decide.

It was now or never. She jumped into the void with Loi following behind her as the two closed their eyes, hoping for the best.

Empty. That's how she felt after jumping to the void. What was she even thinking?! It was frankly stupid decision on her end, but she had no other choice. She thought it was better than the alternative. But now, she didn't have time to question her decision. What's done was done.

Joyce could feel her face getting burnt by the sun itself. She rubbed her eyes and looked around her. She was lying down in somewhere she never wanted to be in.

Is this... Diamond City?

She got up and looked around her. It was true, she was now in Diamond City. But… why here? There had to be an explanation for this. She overheard the cawing of a crow right behind her.

Loi, is that you?
Ya' escaped too?

Loi nods and continues cawing some more. It was obvious he wasn't used to this type of environment. Joyce was unsure on what to do. Diamond City was far away from The Mountain That Never Ends. She thought she could steal a vehicle try to reach her crew before it was too late. But even then, they could have gone farther away from the mountain itself. She picked up Loi and looked around the city. It was just as she expected. Just a bunch of citizens going by their day, occasionally waving at Joyce (much to her annoyance). She was thankful no one knew she was around these parts considering she was and still is a wanted criminal by MPC2 themselves. She started looking around the city for a vehicle to steal. There weren't a bunch of options admittedly. Some of them were too small while some of

them were too complicated for her to drive. She needed something simple like a motorcycle. She found one in a back alley. It seemed relatively new, which should be enough for her to reach her crew. Right before she could snatch it.

Hey! You there!

W-what?!

Joyce quickly checked her pockets and noticed that she was out of potions. She gulped in fear.

Ah was just... looking at mah motorcycle!
Yeah! That's it!

Hm...
* Holding a piece of paper *
Are you... part of the Rascals?

...no.
Why would ya' ask?

Well, you look pretty similar to this person's wanted poster!
They seem highly dangerous.

...

Then again, you don't have a hat so it might just be a coincidence.

Grr…

Oh well... sorry for that ma’am.
It was an honest mistake.

Just go already.
Ya’ are embarrassing yourself.

Right...
* Tips his fedora and starts walking away *
Cheerios!

Cheeri... what now?

Joyce was very confused but also relieved at the same time. Even though she was still upset over the lack of her hat, she was relieved that no one in this city, filled with idiots, could tell who she really was! Now if she could get this thing to work properly...

Joyce, is that you?

T-that voice...
* Looks behind her *
No, no, NO!
This can’t be! Not you two!

What’s wrong, Joyce?
Too excited to see your own brothers again?

A TE:R STORY
ADVENTURES FROM PERDIAH
WHOS BOOK IS THIS ANYWAY?
JOYCE'S QUEST (2/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
SOHEKUN

JOYCE'S QUEST (2/3)

RUN FOR IT, BOYS!

Hey-

STOP IN THE NAME OF THE CRYSTAL QUEEN!

Funny, Markus thought. Usually, they were the ones hunting down innocent people, screaming for help. But now? The roles were reversed.

The Rascals were being chased around by crystal knights, wanting new comrades for their cause. The trio were lucky with dodging all of the oncoming lasers, but Markus knew they were going to get tired eventually.

Sir, what are we going to do?!

* Shoots an arrow at their leader *
We will try to get them off our backs, of course!
Joyce!

Yes, boss?

Paralyze them with one of your potions!
Surely, you must have something like that!

Sure, boss!

Joyce stopped running, transformed her card into a potion and threw it towards the army. They stopped in their tracks... for a little bit. They were free from the potion's affect in less than a few seconds.

What the-

Markus pulls Joyce away from an oncoming laser at the last second.

B-but it should have...

No time to think about that, Joyce!

"We need a plan... fast!"

Meanwhile, back on Diamond City; Joyce was questioning reality all together. She was looking at the two people she never wanted to see ever again in her life... her older brothers.

Come on, Joyce!
Just say something!

...what are ya' two doing here?

We could ask the same to you, sis.

The scientist in green clothing starts slowly walking towards her.

NO, NO!
STAY AWAY!
STAY AW-

Before she could defend herself, the brother leaned in for a hug.
Joyce was feeling so uncomfortable.

We missed you so much, sis!

Yeah, we really did!
* Joins to the sibling hug *
It’s been such a long time, sis!
Where have you been?

And who’s your crow friend?

Joyce slightly pushes the two away and looks at them.

It’s none of ya’ business.

Aww, but why the aggression, sis?

Yeah, we missed you so much!
I thought you would as well!

No, ah haven’t.
Now, can ya’ two just leave me alone?

Joyce turned her back and continued trying to get the motorcycle to work while The Folio Bros were confused. They didn't understand why their little sister was acting this way towards them. Sure, they haven't seen her for over a decade, but they didn't think she would be so aggressive.

What are you trying to do, Joyce?

Like ah said, it's none of ya' business Hattie!

Maybe we could help you with... whatever you are trying to do.

No chance, Don.
Ah don't need you two idiots' help.
Ya' will just slow me down, anyways.

Hattie took a deep breath and put his hand on his little sister's shoulder.

WHAT?!

Look, Joyce.
I... know that you don't really like us but please.
We haven't seen you in such a long time, we were worried about you.

Yeah, just tell us what happened, and we will help you.

...fine.
But only because ah know you two won't take "no" for an answer!

Sweet.
* Looks around *
Though, we should probably go talk somewhere more... private.

Good idea bro.
Our lab should be somewhere close.

You two own a lab?

Yup, we sure do.
We would love to show it to you.

Loi suddenly stars biting Hattie's hair.

OUCH!
Can you tell your pet bird to stop eating my hair?
I took a bath just this morning!

He's *not* mah pet bird.

Hattie shoos Loi away and puts Joyce's arm on his shoulder.

What are ya' doing?

I’m helping you walk there!

Ah’m fine, Hattie.
I can walk on my own just-

Joyce walks a step forward and then holds her heart in panic. The escape really had a toll on her.

See, you need my help.
Let me help, sis.

...sure.
Whatever.

And thus, the Folio siblings were reunited after a decade apart from each other. Joyce was still unsure how to feel about this but if there was a choice between spending time with her hated brothers or lying down helplessly on a dark alley all by herself... she knew which one to pick. Still, that didn’t mean she was completely happy with her decision. While they were going around the city looking for the lab, Don was playing tourist guide to her, explaining what places this “lovely” city had in store for her.

And this right here is a coffee shop!
Me and Hattie get our daily coffee here every night!
Isn’t that right, bro?

* Gives him a thumbs up *
You are dang right, bro.

Ah hate coffee.

Aww, it ain’t so bad when you acquire the taste for it.

Whatever... where’s that stupid lab anyways?!

Just a few blocks ahead, sis.
Hold on a bit longer, okay?

Fine.
Whatevs.

* Points at his right *
And now, we have the MPC2 HQ!
The most fabulous place on Diamond City!

The... what?

Oh, you know?
The awesome team fighting the forces of evil for all of us!
That’s their headquarters.

Uh... huh...

You sound like you aren't too thrilled about them.
What's wrong?

N-nothing.

Maybe we should talk to them!
They could help you!

I think you forgot about something, bro.

Huh?

MPC2 members left the city a few hours ago, remember?
They are probably busy fighting another force of evil!

Oh, right.
I forgot about that.

Don smiles and pats Joyce on the back.

Oh well, maybe next time.

Yeah…

Speaking of evil forces, I wonder if they caught any of the Rascals

by now... they have been causing mischief around Perdiah for a while now.

Grr...

Yeah, there are so many selfish people around Perdiah like them. I have no idea how they can they live with themselves when there are people trying to protect everyone on this planet-

CAN WE JUST GO TO THE LAB ALREADY?!

Oh, sorry sis.

Oh, was it something I said?

Joyce pushes Hattie away and starts walking on her own.

WHERE IS IT?

Sis, is everything alright?

NO, IT IS NOT.
QUIT YAPPIN' AND SHOW ME WHERE IT IS!

The Folio Bros looked at each other in worry and confusion. Why was she so mad again? The two thought they were all connecting again. The two continued showing the way to their lab and then stopped in front of a modern building.

Is this... the place?

Don points at the sign in front of the building saying, “Super Folio Bros. Potion Store”.

Ah.

The Folio Bros. enter the building and start showing off the place to their sister. It was a majestic sight to behold. There were a bunch of brewing stands filled with different types of potions, all waiting to be delivered to the customers. Even Joyce was impressed... a tiny bit at least.

* Lightly hits Joyce with his shoulder *
Ayyyy?
Do you like it, sis?

Ah must say it’s... an interesting place.

Yeah!
It was such a good feeling to finally accomplish what dad wanted all these years later!

Ah noticed...

Even though he wanted all three of us to be a part of his dream... I’m glad me and Hattie made it come true.

Yup!
* smiles *
But now, we all make dad’s wish fully come true!

W-what?

Yep! Since you are with us now, we can rebrand our store to... The Folio Family Potion Store!

Erm... I don’t know.
The name doesn’t roll off the tongue as well.

Pfft... we can think of a different name in the next few days anyways!
* Puts his hand on Joyce’s shoulder *
So, Joyce... what do you think?
Are you excited?!

...no.

Um... pardon?

So happy to see ya’ idiots still oblivious as ever!

Was that... sarcasm?

Of course it was!

Loi lands on Joyce’s shoulder and starts chewing on Joyce’s hair again.

WOULD YA’ STOP THAT?!

But... why?
If you didn’t want to be with us again... why did you come here?

Ah didn't come here by choice!
...technically ah did but it wasn’t fully my decision!

But what were you doing in that back alley?

Ah was trying to steal that motorcycle and then go back to mah crew!

You have a... crew?

YES, YOU MORONS!

Joyce knocks off all the potions on the table and then jumps on it.

AH’M PART OF THE RASCALS!

“AND SOMEONE THERE IS TRYING TO STEAL MAH IDENTITY.”

Boss, we can’t keep them at bay for much longer!

I know Joyce, I know!
* Shoots another arrow towards a nearby crystal knight *
We are just waiting for Murray to finish that darn bomb!
* Looks over his shoulder *
How is that bomb of yours coming along, Murray?

I’m almost done, sir.
Though, I don’t think the shield will be able to handle the sheer power of this bomb once we defuse it.

Now, THAT’S what I wanted to hear!

You can’t stay in there for much longer!
Just surrender yourselves to the Crystal Queen!

Not in a million years, bud.

I DID IT!
I FINISHED THE BOMB!

GOOD JOB, MURRAY!
THROW IT AT ‘EM!

Murray quickly throws the bomb at the crystal knights and starts running away with the other two Rascals following behind him. Shortly after, there was a gigantic explosion in the area, knocking every crystal knight down. But the explosion was so large that it was catching up to the Rascals themselves.

Dang it, Murray!
Why did you make it THIS powerful?!

B-but you said-

Markus looks behind him in fear as the dust clouds get closer to covering their vision.

WE ARE NOT GONNA MAKE IT!

Suddenly, Joyce holds both Markus and Murray's hands and the trio get teleported to somewhere that was still close to the area but not close enough to get affected by the explosion. Murray was shocked beyond belief.

How did you do that?!

Uhm... I... created a new potion!
* Smiles at Murray which freaks him out *
I created this potion from the materials I got from those different zones!
I was keeping this as a backup just in case anything drastic like this happened to us!

W-well, that's just too convenient!
* Pulls Markus' jacket *
Boss! Back me up here!

(tired) You know what, Murray?
I honestly don’t care.
She just saved our lives from near death.
I’m not gonna bother checking if it was too convenient or not.

Markus puts his hand on Murray’s back to comfort him.

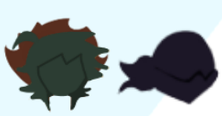
What matters now is that we are safe.

Yeah!

...fine.

While the two were arguing, Markus was looking at the direction of the explosion. Surely, they were dead... right? Unfortunately for him however, Markus noticed the bright light coming from their crystal body parts. They couldn’t even make a dent on them. Markus was horrified. What were these creatures?! If an explosion of that size couldn’t stop them... how were they going to escape?

YOU TWO!



Yes, boss?

They are... they are still alive somehow.
We must fight back.

Murray gulps in fear while “Joyce” was preparing new potions for the team. Markus cracked his knuckles and went to his fight stance. They wouldn’t go down without a fight. But before crystal knights could notice them, something strange happened. All crystal knights

held the crystals stuck on their hands like they were all controlled by one being.

What the-

The queen calls us back to the kingdom!
Our guests have arrived!

And just like that, the whole army turned their back and went away, like nothing ever happened.

W-what was that, sir?!

This is far bigger than we could have possibly imagined, Murray.
We are staying somewhere safe for the night.

“We can’t risk being hunted by those things again.”

So, you are... part of the Rascals?

Uhm... yes?!
Didn’t ya’ listen to what ah just said?!

* Looking at the wanted poster *
But you don’t look anything like the girl on the poster.

Yeah!
That girl has a cowboy hat!

Joyce grabbed the wanted poster out of Don’s hands. She tore up the top of the poster, where the hat was shown and gave it back to Don.

Ooohhh!
That makes sense!

So that was you!

Took ya’ two long enough.

Ugh... but why would you want to be with them?
We have each other now!

Ah’ been running off with dat crew for almost a year now.
Ah gotta let them know they have a creepy witch pretending to be me with them.

Please don’t go, Joyce!
Is it more important than family?!

Joyce punches the table in anger.

Stop talking like dad.

Is it really what this is all about?

YES!

* Shoos Loi away again *
Les say, ah stay here with you two morons.
Then what?
Do we just sell potions to the annoying citizens while we sit around and do nothing?!
Or worse, do we provide goods for those MPC2 bastards?!

I-

* Drops her accent *
That’s the reason why I left all those years ago!
He liked you two more because you were more accepting of his ideas!
I WASN’T.
I never ended up being the favorite child, so I left!

Joyce...

WHAT?!
NOTHING YOU SAY WILL MAKE ME STAY WITH YOU TWO.

You misunderstood dad so much...

We weren’t the favorite children... YOU were.

...what?

In fact, he always told us how much smarter you were compared to

us.
He took fondness for your unique style of potion making.
The only ones he didn't approve of were the very destructive ones.

He wanted to tell you how much he loved you before...

Don looked at Hattie as both closed their eyes with sadness. Joyce knew exactly what they were talking about.

But... that doesn't make sense.

It truly does.
Trust us, please.

Yeah, Joyce.
Please...

Ah understand what you guys are trying to do, really, ah know.
But this here ain't my lifestyle.
No matter ya' two like it or not, ah belong with mah crew.
And right now, their life is in danger!

The two brothers looked at each other in content.

If you say so, Joyce.

Finally!
Just get me a ride and ah'm outta here!

But.

ARGH!
WHAT NOW, HATTIE?!

Joyce was expecting her brothers to try stopping her but they both hugged her again.

Let us help you with the vehicle, okay?

Yeah!
Don’t steal anything, please.

That way, the regional guards won’t notice you were even here!

What do you say, Joyce?

...sure.
Ah don’t want any more trouble till’ ah get back to my rightful place.

I’m glad we could agree, sis.

Yeah.

* chuckles *
Ya’ two are far too nice, ya’ know that?

Actually, yes.

Yeah, a couple of people tell us that like daily.

* smiles *
That’s nice.

Joyce cracks her knuckles and looks around for new lab clothes.

That was a decent enough break.
You two have any free lab coats?

Of course!

Hattie runs to their wardrobe and opens it, revealing a bunch of hangers with the same lab clothes.

Uh... that’s a lot of lab coats.

Yup, it sure is.

Ah’ll just grab one of these for me.
Mah old one got... kinda dirty after having a near death experience.

* chuckles *
I see.

What?
What’s the funny part?

Is just...
* Points at her hair *
Your hair...

What’s with mah hair?
Ah like mah hair better like this!

It just...
* chuckles *
Remember the time dad made Joyce have pigtails?

Oh yeah, that was so funny!

Can we focus on the task already?!

Right, sorry sis.

JINX!

Gosh darn it...

Now you owe me a soda!

Before Don could complain, the entire building started shaking like an earthquake was happening. All 4 of them hanged onto something until it stopped.

* Holding her head *
GRRR... WHAT NOW?!

Hold on, sis.
Let me check outside!

Hattie helps Joyce get up while Loi was spinning around the room panicking.

Are you alright, Joyce?

Ugh... definitely could be better.

Don runs inside the building in panic and locks the doors.

Don, is everything alright?

N- no, not at all!
C-crystals...

Simmer down, bro.
What’s the problem?
Just spit it out already!

There are giant crystal pillars surrounding the entire city!
We are trapped in here!

TE:R
ADVENTURES
JOYCE'S QUEST
(3/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
SUPERTAILS32

JOYCE'S QUEST (3/3)

It was a very eventful day on Planet Perdiah. The true power of the Crystal Queen was finally unleashed upon the world now that she didn't have to hide behind an invisible passage.

While our heroes were struggling with their own baggage, the Folio siblings were also in trouble.

What do ya' mean we are trapped?!

It's true!
There's nowhere to go!

But who would do something like this?!

Ah have no clue but still, we need to get the heck outta' here!

B-but we can't leave all our stuff!

Y- yeah!
We spent so much time here, we can't possibly leave-

Hattie's sentence was interrupted as the three started overhearing sounds of laser blasts.

Sorry Hattie but ya' guys are in mah turf now!

Joyce tried donning her hat but then realized she didn't have it. The brothers were both confused.

E- ehem...
(embarrassed) A-anyways!
* Starts collecting the potions on top of the table *
Ah'll check just what the heck's goin' on outside.

B-but Joyce, those potions aren't-

No "but's" Hattie.

The Folio Brothers wanted to stop her, but it was already too late. The two reluctantly followed behind her. The whole city was a giant mess. Everyone was screaming for their lives, trying to hide from... people with crystals stuck to their bodies?

What *are* those things?!

Ah'm not sure.

Before Hattie could also say something, the three oversee a person getting crystalized in real time. The person stopped breathing for a single second as their eyes turned blue and crystals started popping out of their skin.

At least we now know where the laser sounds came from.

T-this is madness!
What or who did this?!

We gotta shoot first, ask questions later.

We are in dangerous territory!

Before they could ask Joyce, they noticed one of the crystal knights pointing at them. They were spotted.

Ooh, this is going to be interesting!

Joyce, what are you doing?!
Get inside!

* Readies to throw her potion *
Don’t worry, Hattie.
Ah got this.

Joyce throws the potion towards the crystal knight. But instead of them getting caught in an explosion... their wounds were healed.

(confused) What the heck?!

Joyce rechecks the potion samples in panic.

This is a darn healin’ potion!

Yeah, I was trying to tell you we don’t specialize in making offensive potions!

WHAT?!

Joyce dodges a laser beam at the last second.

GRR... FINE!

Joyce follows behind Hattie and two lock the doors for the time being. While Hattie was trying to catch his breath, Joyce was taking extra measures for the door. She ripped out one of the spare lab coats and twisted the fabric to make the door lock even tighter. There were a bunch of door knocks coming from the other side. It wasn't too long 'till they were able to break in.

That one was one of my favorite lab coats...

Can it, Don!
ARGH!
* Holds her head *
O- okay...
We need a new plan...

Joyce suddenly points at Don.

Don, where can we find a vehicle?

Well... we were going to lend you the teeny-tiny car we bought a few months ago.
It's in the garage.

Good enough.
* Points at Hattie *
Hattie!

Yes, sis?

Ah need you to give me all the potions ya' two made.
Ah need to add my... personal touch to them.

Sure!

Joyce snapped her finger and called for Loi.

Ya' are an annoying little thang but we will need all the help we can get.
Okay?

Loi looked at Joyce and cawed at her loudly. He tried eating at Joyce's hair again and left the building in a hurry afterwards.

GRRR... FINE!
Have it yo' way!
Who needs backup anyways?!
(Stupid bird...)

Joyce clears her throat and looks at her brothers.

So, are we clear?

Yes, sis.

* Whispers *
Not gonna mention the jinx?

No, not the time, bro.

Yeah, fair enough.

The Folio siblings separated inside the building to do their tasks. Joyce was angry but also determined. She wasn't going to give up when she was this close to getting out of here. She remembered seeing crystals like this before with her crew. But this crystal magic thingy... ugh. That was news for her. She wondered if her crew also encountered these things...

I-I'm here, sis!
* Lays down all the potions on the table *
Pick em' up!

Excellent, Hattie!

Joyce grabbed the potions and started experimenting with their structures.

The car's safe and sound, Joyce!

The three overhear the sound of a door being punched repeatedly.

…there are people trying to break in through the hangar doors though.

Ugh... of course.

Now, what do we do?

Yeah, even if we escape, we can’t get through those pillars!

Joyce doesn’t respond and makes the final touches on her potion.
She looks back at the two and shows them the potion.

With... this!

The brothers were both silent. They really didn’t like what they were looking at.

You want us to make more of these... destruction potions?

* Holding his stomach *
I don’t think I want to touch that.

Ah don’t mean that, ya’ morons!

Joyce stands up and looks at her older brothers.

Ah need you two to make speed potions for the car!
* Points back at the potion *
This will just be the final step of our plan.

Oh, that’s easy!
I think we can do that.

Yeah, yeah!

Awesome.

Joyce notices Hattie holding her arm.

But wait!
What are you going to do then?

Ah'll protect us until you two are done with the brewing.

But sis!
That's dangerous.

Mah life is full o' danger, Don.
* Cracks her knuckles *
Ah got this.

O-okay, sis.
Just... stay safe, okay?

Yes, please get back inside if you are hurt.

Joyce takes a deep sigh from annoyance. She knew they meant well but at the same time, she couldn't help but find them annoying.

...fine.
Just be quick on yo' end as well!
We need that thing fully juiced up if we are getting' outta here!

"Cuz' if not, we are toast!"

Are we in the clear, Murray?

Yes, sir.
I don’t see any of those crystal people.

Alright, good.

Markus throws another stick to the campfire they recently made for themselves. All of them were tired after they were chased by those crystal knights. Their moods were lower than ever before. Murray looked inside his backpack and found marshmallows.

Oh sweet!

Did you find them?

Yes, boss!
I’m so glad I kept these with me.

Did you check the expiration date?

Wait, hold on.
I didn’t.
Let me see... ah.

Markus sighs and looks around the place. Ever since the attack, there was a sense of uneasiness on the back of his mind. Perdiah already had its fair sheer of oddities but this... this was on a whole another level. Markus couldn’t help but notice the lack of Joyce bickering.

Joyce?

Y- yes, boss?

Is everything alright?

I don’t know.
I just thought things would have been a lot better now that I am in Perdiah again.
But everything seems so... different now.
This wasn’t how I envisioned Perdiah while I was stuck there...

Woah, calm down Joyce!
You were there for only a few hours at most!

...yeah, you are right.
Pardon me boss.
* Smiles at him *
At least I got to spend time with you guys.

Woah, really now?
I never expected you to say something like that.

Heh, frankly I didn’t either.
But you know, you never know what happens.

Hm... fascinating thought, Joyce.

Very fascinating indeed.

Yeah...
* Yawns *
Oh, I’m getting sleepy.
* Takes off her hat *
See you guys tomorrow!

Joyce crosses her hands behind her head and starts singing a little tune while the two guys were trying to make something out of the expired marshmallows. After a while, the singing stopped as Joyce fell asleep.

* Whispers *
Boss?

Yes, Murray?

We need to talk about... “Joyce”.

Hm, I was wondering when you were going to say that.

Wha-
You knew?!

Tsch, of course I knew.

Then why didn’t you back me up?!

...

Ever since we rescued her, she’s been acting so strange.
Her strange new powers?
Acting all happy and jolly all the time?
Thanking us?
Something is not right!

You know, Murray?
I think you are overthinking things.

Why?

You know about that book I told you about?
The one S. Carlos wrote?

Yes, I think I know that.
What’s that have to do with this?

Well, in that book, it also mentioned that there was a purple smoke
that changes the personalities of the ones who inhale it.
* Points at Joyce *
She most likely inhaled way too much of it while we were separated.
That’s why she acts like that.

I mean... that makes sense but... I don’t know.

I could go and investigate every single move she does from this

point forward, but I won't.
* Shushes Murray with his finger *
Wanna know why?

Murray nods.

She seems happier this way.
And I don't want to take that away from her.
Who knows how long the affect of the smoke will last for but all I know is, she won't be this happy ever again.
* Crosses his arms behind his head *
So just chill out, Murray.
She doesn't even act bad towards you anymore, right?

Yeah... you have a point, boss.
But I can't shake the feeling that something is different with her.

"Almost like she's a completely different person."

We are so close to breaking in!

Yes, indeed.
I told you this was going to be easy!
We didn't even need to call Clara for help!

Yeah... you are right.

The two overhear the sounds of a glass breaking.

Wait, did you hear that-

Suddenly, the crystal guards in the area were blasted away by a

potion. When they cleared their eyes, they noticed a singular figure slowly walking towards them with potions on her hands.

Crystallize her!

Joyce quickly dodged the blasters and threw a slowing potion at them. The affect didn't last long however, much to Joyce's surprise.

What the-

Your potions do nothing to us, science girl!
Just surrender yourselves!

No, ah don't think ah will!

Joyce pulls out a bunch more potions from her bag and starts throwing them at the crystal knights. But with each potion throw, she realized she wasn't making any process. The crystals were somehow absorbing some of the potion's affects.

Come on... come on!
* Throws another potion towards their crystals *
Stupid magic thing!
Just break already!

Joyce was having trouble keeping up with all the oncoming lasers. The two crystal knights were keeping her pinned down. She had to pull off something drastic.

Okay, here goes nothing!

Joyce started running circles around the two crystal knights. With every spin, she threw a potion to the ground and got more and more

tired. When she stopped running, the crystal knights were now inside of a circle made from potion substances. And in the blink of an eye, the potions lit up in fire and took down the two crystal knights.

Phew, now that was a close one!

Joyce checked the area to see if they were dead and sure enough, they were.

* Struggling to stand still *
Ah got ‘em, bros!

Awesome job, sis!
Are there any more crystal knights over there?

Nah.
Ah’m pretty sure there isn’t any more of these-
* Notices something *
Any more of these...

Joyce is everything alright?!

More of these...

Joyce was stunned as she watched ten more crystal knights approaching their location.

The- there’s more!

Joyce tries to reach to her potion bag but notices that there wasn’t any potion left in there... besides the potion that was their ticket out

of here.

Joyce, do you need our help?!

* Trying to stand still *
No!
Ya’ two keep workin’ on that car!
Ah’ll... ah’ll...

Joyce was falls to the ground in a weak state. She tried her hardest to get up, but it was no use. She was going to be ambushed by those crystal knights if she got up anyways. She was barely able to take down two of them, how was she supposed to take down ten of them all by herself?

Joyce sees Hattie and Don running towards her. They were holding a bunch of potions on their hands.

Don... Hattie...
What are ya’ two doing here?!

We have come to help you, sis!

No, ya’ two idiots will perish alongside me!
Just run from them while you still can!

We aren’t leaving you alone, sis.
Not this time.

Urgh... fine.
* Hattie helps her get up *

I hope ya’ guys have an idea.

Oh, we sure do, alright?

Joyce looked at her brothers and noticed them nodding towards each other. Before she realized what was going on, the two started throwing a bunch of potions at her, seemingly at random. Joyce was almost about to puke from all the smells coming from all different kinds of potions.
The crystal knights were just as confused as Joyce herself was. But before they could crystallize the brothers, something strange happened. An eye melting light of beam suddenly appeared in the area which caused the crystal knights to get pushed away.

And in the middle of it all, Joyce was looking more determined than ever! There was a blue aura surrounding her entire body, heck her whole color scheme was inverted! In that moment, she felt more powerful than ever before!

* Looks at her hands *
Woah... what is this power?

We gave you all the strength potions we had, sis!

Now go kick their butts, sis!

* Smiles *
Mah pleasure.

Before they could realize what was happening, Joyce punched one of the crystal knights in the face and flung them away in an instant. Joyce couldn’t believe what was happening. She was so excited to use this power to its limit.

* Looks at her brothers *
Finish up the potions for the car!
We are getting outta here!

Got it!

Joyce watched as her brothers got inside the building. Now was the time for some major butt kicking!

The first crystal knight tried shooting her with his own crystallizer, but she was too fast for the beam to hit her. She grabbed the crystal knight by the hoodie and kicked him towards the group. This power was exhilarating!

WOOH!
YEAH!

The group quickly reformed and continued shooting down Joyce. She punched, kicked and humiliated all of them at the same time. It was a feeling like no other.

Ah gotta hand it to those two!
This type of potion makin’ ain’t half bad!
They gotta teach me how to achieve this awesome form!

Meanwhile, inside the Folio Bros’ store.

* Still brewing a potion *
Bro, that was so cool!

I know right?!

I can’t believe she had a literal transformation!

Yeah! I couldn’t believe my eyes either!
What should we call that form?

Hm... I don’t know...
“Super” Joyce?

Nah, that feels too played out.

How about... Reverse Joyce!

* Knocks on the door *
Ya’ guys know there isn’t any soundproof on these walls, right?
Get back to work!

Sorry, sis!

Joyce was keeping the crystal knights at bay while her brothers were brewing final batch of potions. While there were some very close shots from the crystal knights’ crystallizers, she was still in one piece. Even though she was having the time of her life, she knew this form was only temporary. She felt her power deplete with every passing second. They had to get out while she had all this power. Shortly after, she noticed another group of crystal knights approaching their location but this time alongside a purple haired girl Joyce figured was their leader.

* Points the sword at Joyce and starts shouting *
SURRENDER YOURSELVES TO THE CRYSTAL QUEEN AND YOU WILL BE FREED!

Nice sword, sistah!
* Punched her own palm *
Want me to break it?

You little...
ATTACK!

Joyce was still able to handle all the crystal knights just fine, but the purple lady was giving her a lot of trouble with her attack patterns. She wasn’t used to fighting against sword wielders.

Ugh, hold still!
Ya’ are making mah aim look terrible!

The purple lady didn’t respond back. She was too focused on fighting the blue blur.

Okay pardner!
Ah will show ya what ah can do!

Joyce backflips towards her bros’ shop and quickly rushed towards Clara for impact. Clara dodged her at the last second and managed to leave a cut mark on Joyce’s left arm.

UGH!
* Holding her arm *
YOU STUBBORN-

You can’t fight back forever!
Soon, you will have the highest rank of honor you could possibly dream of!
* Almost knocks down Joyce *
By becoming one with Queen Maizie!

Ugh, ya’ crystal folks all talk the same!

Joyce tries the same tactic again but gets hit once again. She had to try a different tactic. Joyce dashes towards Clara but not to attack her directly. Instead, she stood still and pretended to hit Clara on the head but instead tripped her to the ground. Clara looked around for her sword, but Joyce quickly tossed it away with her foot.

Ah would stay down if ah were you, dummy.

Clara looked at Joyce with hatred in her eyes. Before Joyce could knock her down, she felt the power she once had stripping away in real time. She was starting to feel dizzy.

Ugh... ah'm runnin' outta juice...

Joyce was back to her usual, tired, self. Her colors turned back to normal. She couldn't even finish Clara off in time.

* Chuckles *
Look at you!
All that talk about "beating" me, but you can't even lay a finger on me now!
* Points the mini crystallizer towards Joyce *
Sayanora, scientist girl.

Joyce knew this was the end. All that trouble... was worth nothing. But then she noticed something approaching behind Clara.

Well, this was fun.

Annoying to the bitter end, eh?

Ya' said it, sistah.
Now, if you will excuse me.
Ah need to hunt down a witch.

(confused) What are you-

Joyce pulls down one of her eyelids and and sticks out her tongue as the Folio Brothers quickly pick her up with the car and start driving towards one of the crystal pillars.

Toodles!

UGH!
DON’T JUST STAND THERE!
SHOOT THEM DOWN!

Ya’ guys had the perfect timin!

We wish we could have saved you sooner but thanks, sis!

Why didn’t ya’ ran over the purple one though?

We have a strict “no violence” policy, remember?

Oh yeah, ah almost forgot about that.

Besides, they seem to be just innocent people turned evil without any choice.

Yeah, it wouldn’t feel right.

Y’all.
We can talk morals later!
Just get us the heck out of here first!

On it!

The Folio siblings were going as fast as they could towards the crystal pillars. The extra speed potions they added to the car was helping them a ton. They noticed all the crystal knights’ attention being focused on them and tried avoiding their crystal beams.

Woah, that almost hit one of the wheels!
Be more careful!

It’s easier said than done, sis!
* Takes a harsh turn to the left *
I don’t want to hurt any of these innocent people!

Ugh... fine!
Whatever...

* Quickly taps Joyce’s shoulder *
...hey, sis.

What now, Hattie?!
It’s not the time!

I know, I know.
I just wanted to ask... do you think you got teleported here instead of anywhere else on Perdiah because of your family being here?

Maybe, ah didn't really give it any thought.
* Looks at Hattie with a blank expression *
Don't make it corny, Hattie.

The three soon spot one of those crystal pillars.

What do we do now, Joyce?

Yeah!
Should we stop the car or-

No, keep drivin' at full speed!

(visibly scared) O-kay, sis!
I hope you know what you are doing!

Joyce kept track on their distance to the pillar. She had to time this potion throw just right.

Just a bit further...

Don was still holding the gas pedal.

Further...

WE ARE GOING TO CRASH!

NOW!

Joyce threw the potion at the car, and they went right through the pillar with excessive force. When the potion's affect wore off, Joyce looked behind them. They left a giant hole at the bottom of one of those pillars. They were free!

Joyce looked at her brothers to see how they were doing. Don looked like he was in a static state while Hattie was still covering his face in fear.

It's alright, you two.
We are out!

We... are?

Yup!
* Looks over to Don *
How is it going, Don?

I-I'm too scared to move my head.
I think I'm going to lose it.

Good enough.

I can't believe we are finally out... now what?

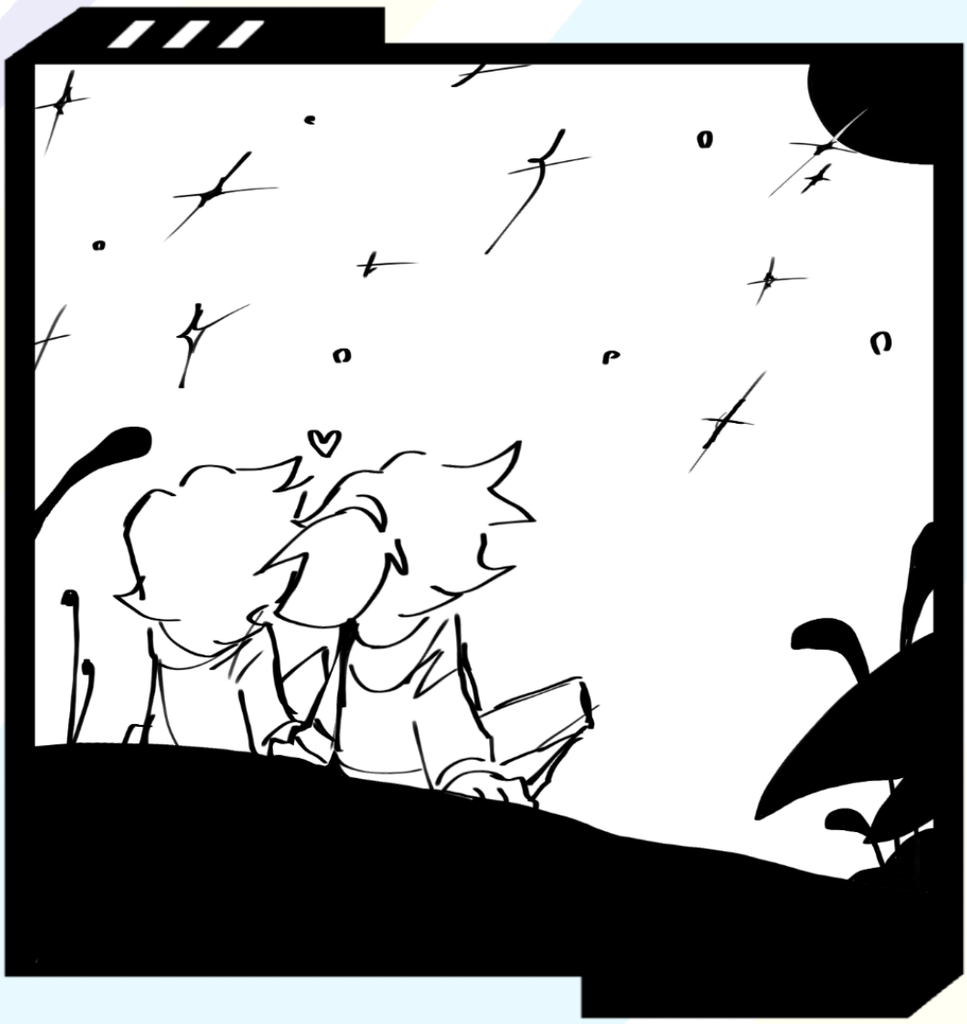
Now... we hunt down the witch who stole mah identity!

“Watch out Marigold cuz’ your head is mine for the taking!”

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
RESCUING A NEMESIS
TURTLEDOODLE1
SOHEKUN

CHAPTER 25: RESCUING A NEMESIS

“Once upon a time, there was a little girl with big dreams for the future. The little girl wanted to be a royal guard, protecting others in her home village from evil do-ers. She trained for long amounts of time to achieve her goal. Along the way, she met the love of her life. Together, she thought nothing could stop them!”

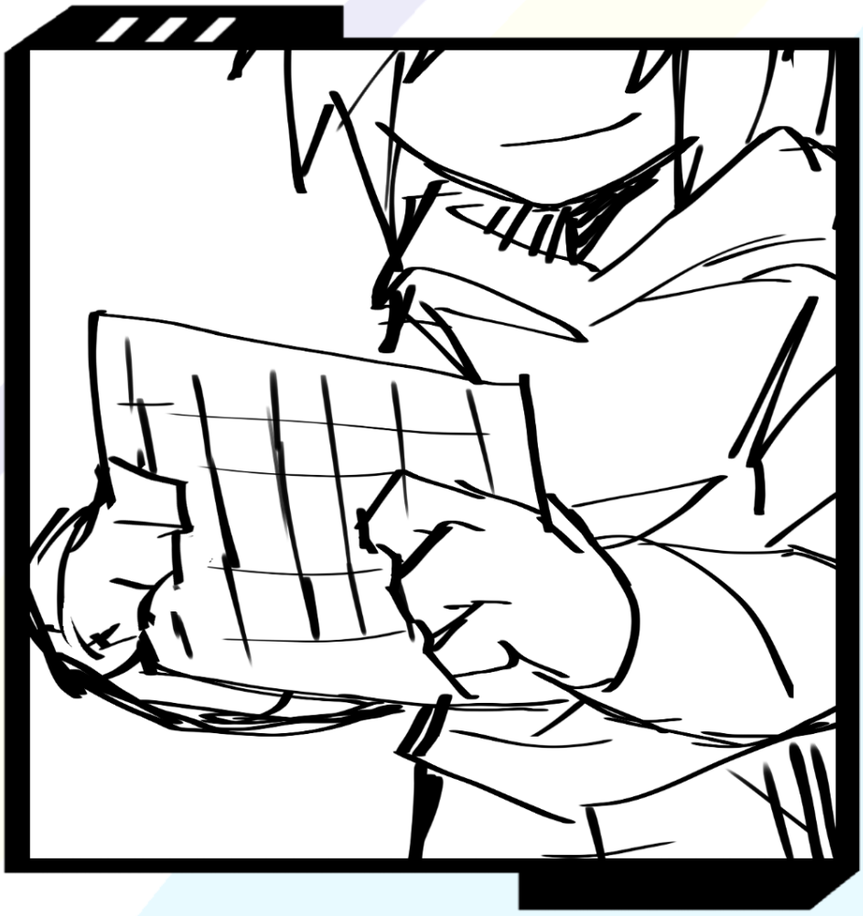


“That was... until Hood, the leader of the hoodsters, alongside her small group of followers arrived on their town. They offered the town a chance to join their side. But the mayor and the royal guards declined the offer, calling them psychopaths on the loose. And Hood... she didn’t take too kindly to their response. She ordered her group to invade the town that night, killing everyone who declined their offer once again. The little girl and her lover hid in a safe place after hearing the news, but they were found shortly after. The girl bowed and begged for mercy. Hood walked towards and asked the girl for her loyalty to their cause. The girl had no choice in the matter. It was either joining the group or dying alongside her lover. She begrudgingly agreed with Hood, and they left their birthplace in ruins.”

“The girl and her lover served Hood for many years to come. They went on multiple missions in the shadows, not being caught by the regional guards and the newly formed Magic Protection Camp, MPC. There were a few minor nuisances along the way, like a few hoodsters trying to run away from their missions. Most of them either went back to Hood or died trying. Although, there were a few exceptions...”

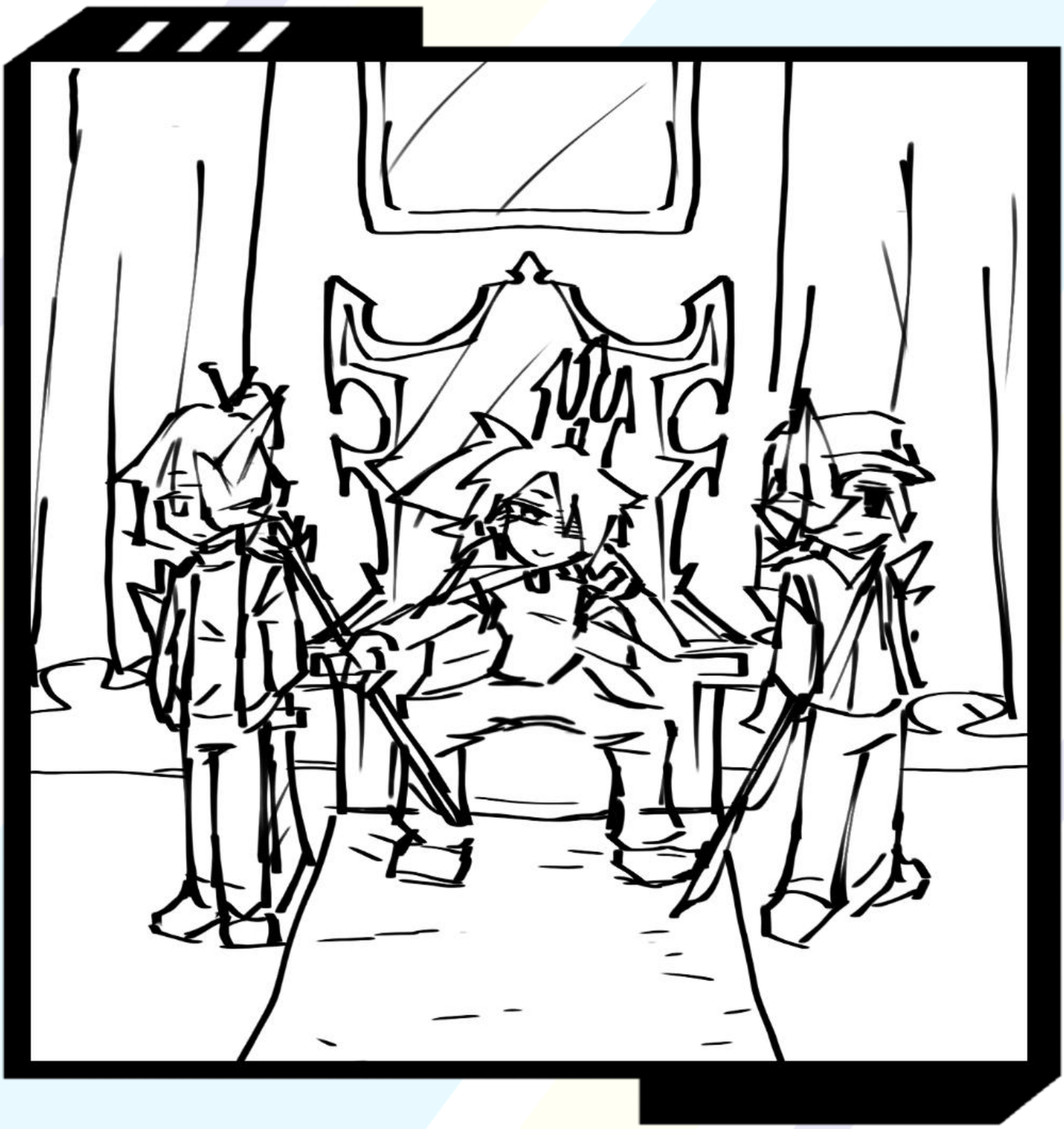
“When Hood finally unleashed her master’s powers to the world, Maizie knew that something needed to change. Alongside her hoodster comrades, she went on missions to capture the two teenage boys who got a hold of Xtress’ powers. On one of those missions, however, she made the biggest mistake of her life. She made Hood mad. To teach her a lesson, Hood killed her lover in the blink of an eye. The girl was left as a former shell of herself after that event.”

“After the girl got beaten by a former MPC member, she ran away with her rocket ship. She considered herself lucky that she got her life essence back right before Xtress stepped foot onto the mortal world. She had no place to stay or go to afterwards. She lost the only person who really cared about her… The girl opened her backpack and looked at the blueprints for a plan Hood never got to finish... A machine that crystalizes people and makes them forever loyal to you... She knew what to do.”



“The girl manipulated a whole town, and later an entire city, on her fingertips and took control of all of it. She had to make... heartbreaking sacrifices along the way but she knew that it was all going to pay out at the end.”

“The girl lured the newly formed MPC2 to the heart of her kingdom and even crystallized one of the members! Some of them were captured while some of them ran away like cowards. She had a clear plan in mind now, crystallize the remaining members and revive the love of her life with Xtress’ powers! Nothing could stand on her way now!”



“Not anyone.”

It was a rainy day on Planet Perdiah. The Crystal Queen was looking out from her windows to watch the raindrops turn into crystal as they hit the ground. It was peaceful to her. She suddenly heard a door creaking sound.

Excuse me, my queen.
I had to check our prisoners before coming here.

It’s okay, Clara.
You can come in.

Thank you for your kindness, my queen.
* bows *
For what reason did you request my assistance?

You can drop the formalities for now, Clara.

Alright.

I need you and a crystal knight group to hunt down the remaining MPC2 members.
If I read them correctly, they are going back to the only place they care about, Diamond City!
I have alerted our agent in the city to start crystallizing the people in there!
So just crystallize them before they try anything funny!
They can’t be allowed to foil my plans!
Not after we have come this far!

Understood.

The group is waiting for you outside.
Don’t fail me!

As… you wish, my queen.

Clara stood up and left the room. Maizie took a deep breath and started to talk to herself.

Woah, I sounded way too much like Hood there…
Whatever, I can just apologize to her when she’s back from her mission.
After all, she needs to EARN it first!

Maizie got up from her throne and started walking around. She pulled out her staff and started practicing with it. She casted a spell towards the test dummy in her room and misses it by a few centimeters. I should work on my aim, she thought to herself. Only when she crystallized the dummy, she took a step back and realized how messy her throne room became.

Old habits die hard I suppose...

She then heard knocking on the doors again and pointed her staff towards it. She didn’t call for anybody else.

Who dares interrupt the queen’s past time?!

Sorry, queenie!
Wrong room!

...oh. It’s just you, Bushra.

Yeah, sorry.
I was just trying to find my room.

* coughs *
Well, that’s great!
Maybe ask Terry for help!
I’m sure he would be more than happy to help you.

What about Lydia?

…I don’t think you would want to do that.

Hm… alright, then.
Sorry again!

N-No problem.

Bushra leaves and closes the door.

That… was embarrassing.
* Shakes her head *
No matter now.

Maizie picks up her staff and chuckles.

I need to pay some former MPC2 members a visit today!

“They have something I am very interested in...”

A few hours later, above the Enchanted Forest:

* Talking on the phone *
Hello, sir? Sir?
We are coming back as fast as we can.
Please stay calm… sir?
…sigh.
* Ends the call in sadness *
Hey, Emily.
Do- do you see home?

* Looking through the binoculars *
N- no, Uncle Tender.
Can you see it, Robert?

No response.

Yeah... me too, Robert.

Artender looks back at PotaTeo, he was still playing with some of the toys they brought along with them. His kids seemed... okay. Pretty startled after everything that went down but his family seemed to be in decent shape. But there was one other person who managed to escape. Someone who lost people so close to them in the matter of just two days. Someone who refused to utter any word since he lost his closest friend during their escape.

G? Are you doing alright?

...

Look, G…
I’m sorry.

Sorry for what?
You didn't do anything.

I could have helped you more with saving... you know.

Hm...

But... that's not the point.
We all escaped safely, and we can still take back what rightfully belongs to us!

But without Ms. Meow, Sarpo and… yeah.

Hey, now-

Hey, what?!
Do you even HAVE a plan?!

Uhm…

That’s what I thought!
We are just stuck on this balloon!
Do you think Diamond City will be safe from these monsters?!
Of course not!

I didn't even-

G, are you... okay?

* Turns back to Artender with tears in his eyes *
N- no, I am not!
What kind of question is that?!

G, please.
Don't act like this, you know *he* wouldn't want you to be like this either.

…
I- I saw the terrified expression on Bushra's face right before we lost him...
He sacrificed himself for our safety and yet, I couldn’t do anything.

G, you are being too hard on yourself.

You don't get it, do you?
Before I met him, I was some loner who was still grieving over the loss of my childhood friend!
He gave me a second chance at life, and I blew it!

G... I know you are upset.
Bushra saved me back in the day when I needed help the most too.
If not for him...
* Looks at his kids *
I wouldn't have had them.

…

So please, try to calm down.
I assure you that we can win this battle just like last time!

But last time I had... my powers.

Excuse me?
What do you mean?

Maizie tried to take our powers for herself.
I stopped her with my hammer before it could affect Bushra, but I lost my powers in the process.
* Turns back again *
I'm... so sorry.

I...
* Takes a deep breath *
Okay, that certainly makes things more complicated.

…sigh.
But you are right, this isn’t what Bushra would have wanted.
I will... try to feel better about our current situation.

Yeah, that’s the spirit!

Alright…
* Takes a deep breath *
So… what now?
How do we stop this psycho queen?

Hm... I remember Sarpo telling us that Maizie wasn't the one who came up with this "crystallization" idea.
It was someone else's idea.
It was...

Hood’s.

The two looked at each other in disbelief.

Oh my gosh, I can’t believe we forgot about her!

EXACTLY!
* Hits the basket *
ARE YOU SERIOUS RIGHT NOW?!

Artender looks at G, thinking he would also feel terrible about this revelation but instead, he saw him smiling for the first time since they left the Crystal Kingdom.

Uh… G?

Dude, what if this is a blessing in disguise?!
Think about it!
Since Hood created the technology, she might help us defeat Queen Maizie in exchange for her safety!

…and we can lock her up again after we are done with Maizie.
That’s a brilliant idea!

* Fist bumps *

Thanks, Artender!
It's so good to finally have a solid plan in mind!

I know, right?
Recent stuff has been driving me crazy!

Erm… Uncle Tender?

What is it, dear?

I see home but uhm…

Emily points at Diamond City. Artender was so shocked at what he saw that he almost fainted on the spot. Their city, their HOME, was covered fully in crystals. There were a bunch of giant crystal pillars, preventing anyone from ever trying to escape.

Yo Artender, what's the problem?
* Sees the city *
Oh. How did they crystallize the whole city already?!

A crystal knight was probably hidden inside the city way before we figured out her plans.
Screw that though, we need to rescue Hood and the survivors before we get the heck out of here!

On it!
* Releases hot air from the balloon *
We should be landing in a few seconds!

* Takes away the binoculars from Emily's hands *
Please get inside, dear.
I don't want you getting hurt.

O- of course, Uncle Tender!
* Holds his hand *
Were you and Mr. Doodle talking about Ms. Hood?

…yes?
How do you know about her?

Don’t want to interrupt but we are landing, you guys!
Hold onto something!

R- right.
* Looks at Emily *
We will talk about this later, okay Emily?
Just hold on to your brother for a second.

O- okay, Uncle Tender!

Shortly after, they landed. G hopped out of the basket and looked around the place. Emily put her brother inside Robert again to keep him safe. This place was bursting with colors just a few hours ago… but now the whole area was all filled with the same nauseating crystal color.

We are here, guys.
Where should I tie the rope knot?

Hm... you can tie it up somewhere that we can easily access.
Just make sure the crystal knights don’t find it so easily.

G notices a tall tree close to their location and decides to take the balloon there. He ties the rope knot around one of the branches. Now it looked like it wasn’t even there... if no one didn’t squint their eyes, at least.

Does that work?

Sure does.
Now that we got that out of the way... how are we going to get inside?

* Points at somewhere *
Maybe through here?

The two looked at where Emily was pointing, and they saw a passage on one of the crystals. But... something about it didn't feel right. It looked like it was ripped open by force, almost like somebody inside the city managed to escape without them knowing.

Well, I don't know about you Artender, but I won't complain about a free passageway!

Hm... yeah, you are right.
I'm probably overthinking it.
* Holds Emily's hand *
Come on kids, let's go.

As the four of them went through the passage, they were greeted to sheer chaos. So many citizens were fighting for their own safety while the crystal knights were gaining more and more recruits by the

minute.

Talk about a warm welcome…

Gosh, what did they do to this place?!

I don’t know and I don’t like it.
* Looks around *
We need to first find Hood, recruit as many people as possible and then-

Artender notices something and quickly pushed the group behind the nearest house.

HEY, WHAT’S THE BIG IDEA?!

Shut it for a second, G.
We have familiar company.

What do you-

G looked over Artender’s shoulder and saw Clara commanding the crystal knights.

Nice job, team.
Soon enough, the entirety of Diamond City will belong to our beloved queen!
Search around the place for the others!
We can’t let anyone else escape!

Clara pulled out her sword and commanded her army to continue

their ambush. The MPC2 crew waited until they were out of sight.

So, some people DID manage to get away...

Screw that, Artender!
What are we going to do now?!

Hm...
I'm not sure.
We could follow the crystal knights from behind without being spotted or-

Suddenly, the two hear a harsh sound of a branch breaking. They turn back and notice that Emily was the one who accidentally stepped on one. Unfortunately for them, the crystal knights also heard it.

Someone's hiding from us.
SCATTER AROUND THE AREA AND CRYSTALLIZE THEM!

The crystal knights scattered into a bunch of groups, so did the MPC members. Artender picked up Emily and hid behind a nearby house while G hid in bushes, just like old times.

I-I'm sorry, Uncle Tender!
I didn't know-

Ssshhh!
It's okay, just keep quiet.

G was watching around the area while still in hiding. It was going to be tough getting inside the headquarters, let alone escape from there! He notices a crystal knight slowly approaching the Tenders' location

and almost finding them. Emily was almost going to scream from horror, but Artender kept her mouth shut with his hand. G had to do something to keep the Tender family safe. He looked around him for something... ANYTHING to distract the crystal knight. He found a rock and threw it somewhere far away. The crystal knight and their leader both heard the sound.

THERE THEY ARE!
BLAST THEM AWAY!

All the crystal knights started blasting the empty area with their mini crystallizer blasters while Clara readied her sword just in case they resisted. G took advantage of this and ran behind a different house to hide. He looked back at the Tender family and used his body language to communicate with them.

What on Perdiah is he trying to do...

G was shaking his hand towards himself, telling them to get away from behind that house. It took Artender a while, but he understood. He held Emily's hand and quickly rushed to their new hiding spot.

Phew, that was a close call.
Glad you guys made it-

Sssh... not yet.

Artender pointed at the crystal knights and Clara checking up on their previous hiding spot.

Sorry, ma'am but there's nobody here either.

Gosh darn it!

They must be here somewhere!

What if there wasn't anybody, miss?

Nonsense.
I heard it, I heard it!

Clara throws her sword to the ground in anger and looks around her. She was confused and frustrated. They did exactly as their queen ordered and *almost* without any drawbacks. She thought to herself, "Maybe they are right. Perhaps she was seeing things after all." Clara looks at her group of crystal knights.

I'm going back to the Crystal Kingdom.

(confused) But Queen Maizie said-

I know what she said.
The battle with that scientist girl left plenty of wounded people in the area.
I should get them back to the Crystal Kingdom for their safety.

Clara shushed the crystal knight before she could interrupt.

I'll give her a status report when I get back.
I want all of you to research the entire city one more time and get back to the Crystal Kingdom as well.
Just in case.

...as you wish.

Clara ordered some nearby crystal knights to carry the wounded ones to the trucks they came with. She drove in a purple car designed after her.

Sayanora, everybody!

The crystal knights wished them good luck and waved behind them.

Who’s going to tell her “Sayonara” isn’t pronounced like that?

Meh, sometime later.
Our mission has changed.
Keep looking for possible survivors!

The crystal knights left the area and the MPC members all sighed in relief.

Wow, that was awfully close.

You don’t say?
So... what now?

I’m-

And don’t say you don’t have any idea!
Come on man, you must have thought of at least something!

Artender covers his face with his hands.

I just... don’t know!
We are in no shape for a fight against the crystal knights.
And even if we were, how are we supposed to escape from here?
There are crystal knights everywhere!

Stating our problems won’t get us anywhere!
Think man, THINK!

GRR… you stubborn... fine!
But you do so as well!

The two started walking around in circles while thinking of possible ideas. Meanwhile, Emily was drawing something on the mud with a stick. As she was drawing, the stick got stuck on something. Emily thought it was a rock but when she cleaned up the mud, she noticed it was something else entirely.

Um... Uncle Tender?

Yes, Emily?

I think I found something.

The two looked at what Emily was pointing towards. It was a sealed hatch, seemingly hidden under the mud for no reason. Both were confused to say the least.

What on Perdiah is this...

While Artender was checking if it was safe or not, G was thinking what this could possibly be. After a bit, he recalled the time Sarpo popped out of one of these hatches and got him and Bushra safely

inside the headquarters when the people rallied over Xtress' return. This must have been one of the entry points... Artender looked behind him and saw G smiling which made him confused.

Uh... why are you smiling, G?
Is something up?

I think just found our ticket to getting inside!

Crystal Kingdom, inside the super-secret prison room;

The two MPC2 members were chained to the opposite walls from each other, thinking about what went down in the last 24 hours. If everything went as Sarpo planned, he would have been in sitting comfortably inside MPC2 headquarters with his family by his side. Unfortunately for him, however, that was not the case. Both looked at each other in silence. They didn't know where to start...

I'm... sorry, Cloe.

For what, hon?
This isn't your fault.

Is it not?
If I didn't rush in, perhaps we would have been more prepared-

You shush.
If we didn't go after her, who knows how many more days would go by without us knowing about her scheme!
* Realizes Sarpo trying to stretch his robotic arm *
What are you trying to do?

I'm trying to get us out of here!

After minutes of trying and failing, Sarpo takes a deep breath and looks at Cloe.

Don't feel bad, hon...

I'm trying not to... but it's so difficult.
I was in a similar situation like this before with Hood, but I got out of that situation just fine!
And look at us now! We are back at square one!
It's so frustrating!

Well... just like Hood, she must have a reason for keeping us here.
There's something far sinister going on here that we don't know of...

Just as Cloe said that the door opened as the Crystal Queen walked into the room.

(Speaking of the devil)

Hello there, Mr. Fields, and Cloe.

Cut to the chase lady, why are we locked up in here and not crystallized?!

My my...
* grins*

You catch on quick, Mr. Fields.
I like that about you...

Shut up, you crazy-

Queen Maizie suddenly points her staff at Cloe, effectively making her shut up for the time being.

B- bop, no talking.
* Turns back at Sarpo *
I'm assuming you realized you were part of something greater than you could possibly imagine.

...yes.

* grins *
Very well. I didn't turn you two into crystals knights because you two have something that I'm interested in.
And that is...
* Taps on Sarpo's robotic arm *
...your robotic parts.

W- what? Why?!

Isn’t an army full of crystalized soldiers enough?!

* chuckles *
It wouldn't be fun if I spoiled the surprise, would it?

Maizie looks at outside and orders her crystal knights to bring her

several calculating devices. Even though Sarpo didn't want to show it, he was getting a bit scared. Maizie grabs a tangential ruler and starts calculating his robotic arm's length.

Hm... how long was your arm before it got... replaced?

* frowns *
And why should I tell you, exactly?

* Grins and points her staff at Cloe *
I think you already know the answer to that.

Sarpo deeply sighs and looks at Maizie again.

Now, please don't waste my time and answer the question.

... 15.2 inches.

Fascinating... this robotic arm is longer than your original arm.
Guards! Bring me a notebook!

The guards ran as fast as they could to the throne room to find their queen's needs while she was standing right besides Sarpo.

So, what happened to your purple lackey?
* chuckles *
Last time I saw her, she seemed deeply upset!
Did you break her heart or something?

Grr… as a matter of fact, cyborg man, she’s on a very important mission right now.

And that is?

Catching the rest of your idiotic members, obviously!

Some of them escaped?!

Unfortunately, I’ll make sure they won’t be for too long!

You are underestimating them, and you know it.

You are **scared** of them.

Maybe I am, maybe I am not.
* Points the staff at Sarpo *
That’s the fun part, isn’t it?

Back at Diamond City, the MPC members were trying to navigate through the tunnel system. Emily was complaining about being tired while G was leading the way since he was the one who was most familiar with these tunnels.

* yawns *
Uncle Tender, I’m getting sleepy!

Would you want me to carry you until we are back on the surface?

Before she could say yes, G stops on a dime and everyone bumps into each other. G looked behind him afterwards.

* Holding her head *
Ouchie...

You could have given us a warning, you know?

G nervously chuckles but tries to focus on the task at hand. It was a miracle that they weren't caught already so he wasn't going to risk anything else.

* Picks Emily up *
Say, how can you tell where we are?
Do self-acclaimed forest monsters have a 6th sense or something?

That's... not how it works.
I'm going off memory.

So, we are essentially screwed?

Ugh... give me a break...

G suddenly stops again but Artender was prepared this time.

I TOLD YOU TO GIVE ME A WARNING-

Artender notices G pointing at another hatch on top of them.

Is this... the place?

I sure hope so.

G lightly pushed the hatch and went to check outside. They were inside the headquarters.

Oh, thank goodness.
* Looks at the hatch *
Guys, we are in the right place!
Get over here!

Ooh, nice one.
I’m taking back what I just said.

* Helps him get out *
Yeah, yeah.

The three members looked inside the building in complete awe. It was just like they left it... to an uncomfortable degree. All the other places they went to in Diamond City were either damaged or destroyed beyond recognition. This on the other hand? It was neither.

Okay so we just rescue Hood and get the heck out of here with the tunnels?

Correct.

Sweet.
* Prepares to run *
Race you guys there!

* Holds G by the shoulder which almost causes him to fall down *
Not so fast.

What’s the problem?

This... doesn’t feel right.
Maybe there are crystal knights inside the building, waiting for an ambush.

Y-you mean bad guys could be here?!

...sadly so, little one.

Okay so we take things slow then.

Precisely.

Alright then.
* Looks at the long corridor in front of them *
Oh boy.

The group slowly traversed through the hallway, looking to their lefts and rights at every corner. Who knew if a crystal knight could jump them at any second. G preferred not thinking about it for

extensive periods of time. Artender was also worried for Emily. She didn't seem like she was keen on interacting with Hood. Even though he respected her privacy, he needed to know what was up with the two.

And we are here.

G leans back to the wall but almost trips because of him leaning back to the void. Emily chuckles.

E-Ehem.
Anyways, I don't remember the password so you can enter it.

Right.

Artender types in "2MZ4" and watches as the door gets unlocked. The group walked inside the room, expecting the worst outcome.

But to their surprise, it was nothing like they expected. Hood looked just as bored as ever... but also a bit angry.

Hello there, MPC.
What brings you here?
* Notices Emily *
Hey there, Emily.
Long time no see.

Emily looks away from Hood in shame. She didn't want to be here.

Don't play dumb with us, Hood!
You already know what's happening?

Goodness me, why the aggression?

I was just going to tell you that the TV lost connection.
It has been this way since the last couple of hours!

H-huh?!

Why are you looking at me like that?!
I missed out on the newest Mandy & Friends episode and all of you are going to pay for that!

No, we just thought you already knew what was happening.

Gosh, just tell me what happened already.
* Tries to mimick G's voice *
"You wouldn't want to know!"
"Oh, the horror!"

HEY!

Keep it quiet, G.
* Walks slowly towards the cell *
We have met one of your failures.

Now, isn't that kinda vague, pumpkin?
Can you elaborate-

(still angry) Maizie, one of your old hoodsters, who declared herself as the Crystal Queen, is terrorizing Perdiah by crystallizing innocent people to join her side!

...Maizie?
The blue one?
Member #3?

Yes, that’s the one.

And what did you say she was doing?

She... crystallizes people?
Basically, they get hit by a laser blast and crystals start coming out-

I know how it works, you numbnut.
I ordered that technology to be made in the first place.

YOU DID?!

I sure did.
She probably stole the blueprints from one of my mechanic hoodsters.
My bet’s on the bald one.

So, if you ordered it, you must know a weakness of it, right?!

I’m afraid there’s none, pumpkin.
Not that I recall anyways.
My Crystallizer was supposed to be a backup plan in case we lost control of Xtress... which we unfortunately did.
I’m surprised the twat managed to pull a fast one on me and got a

hold of the blueprints.
Masterful gambit, Maizie.
You played well.

B-but-

They suddenly started hearing sounds of a door being knocked repeatedly. The crystal knights must have found out about their location.

Okay, we don’t have time for this!
* Checks his pockets to find the keys *
We are getting you out of here!

Oh my.
Why little old me?

I’m not going to say why but you are coming with us!

* chuckles *
If you say so, pumpkin.

Artender gets Hood out of the cell and the group make a run for it towards the hatch.

Almost there... almost!

Suddenly, a crystal laser coming from a broken window almost hits G on the head.

YOW!

G, are you alright?!

I-I’m fine!
Let’s just hurry up, they are going to find us!

G showed Hood and the others the hatch and just before the crystal knights could bust in through the door, they were all underground. All besides G and Artender.

Come on, G!
What are you doing?!

I will buy you guys some time just so you can get to safety!

How are you planning on doing that?!

I will... try to use my powers.
Surely, they can’t all be gone!

G tried focusing on using his powers and his eyes started glowing red. But just like last time, all it resulted in was a headache for G.

G, are you okay?!

Hngh... my head...

Artender jumped out of the hatch and tried carrying G to the tunnels right before the crystal knights got in.

The survivors must be here!
* Looks at the crystal knights *
Search around the place!

“Wait, wasn’t Clara supposed to give out orders for us?”
“Are we even sure there are people in here?”
“I think I lost my blaster back at the kingdom.”

* sigh *
Just... look around, I don’t know!

Wowie, what an interesting place!
* Lightly hit the little kid on the shoulder *
Ain’t that right, Emily?

...

Whatevs.
Though, the reservations could have been better.
I can barely breath in here!

* Still carrying G *
Can it, Hood!
We are running out of time!

Wow, so hostile.
Say, how are we going to escape once we are out of this dump?

We-we have a balloon hidden just outside the crystal pillars.
If we can get there without anyone noticing, we can escape safely.

How considerate of you.

I-I found something!

What is it?

The crystal knight shows the hatch hidden under a carpet in the middle of the building. They both gave it their all and opened the hatch. There was an underground tunnel there.

Now it was just a big game of cat and mouse.

We should be there... almost...

* Holding his head *
Ugh...

G, you are awake!

What...happened?

You tried using your powers but became unconscious again.
You really gotta stop doing that!

...sorry, I just thought it would work.

It’s okay.
* Sees the hatch *
We have arrived at our location.
Just help me get Hood and the kids to safety.

On it!

Artender opens the hatch and looks around. There were thankfully no crystal knights in the area... that they knew of.

Okay, let’s book it.

Artender jumps out of the hatch and gets Emily out of the hatch.

I’m scared, Uncle Tender...

It will all be alright, Emily.
We are getting out of here soon.

Meanwhile, G was doing the same for Hood.

My oh my, you are quite strong, pumpkin.

Thanks?

When everyone was out of the tunnels, Artender closed the hatch tight. The crystal knights would need some serious manpower to get out of there now. Artender pointed at the crack on the walls and started making a run for it alongside Emily. G and Hood followed suit.

Their trail ends here.

So?!
Just open the hatch already!

But it’s shut tight!

URGH... move aside!

Oh, thank goodness the balloon is okay!

A fascinating looking one, for sure.
Where did you get it?

We stole it from the kingdom.
The knights probably thought this was part of their own arsenal.
* Shakes his head *
Nevermind that!
G, get that thing to work!

Will do!

Artender helped Emily and Hood get inside the basket. The plan was going successfully even if there were a lot of close calls here and there.

There they are.

Shoot.

Artender thinks “Me and my big mouth.” to himself and gets in the basket himself.

G, can we go airborne already?!

I’m trying!
This thing’s just being too stubborn!

* Pushes G aside *
Give me that!

Artender tries speeding up the process but fails spectacularly.

Dude, stop!
You are going to rip it apart!
* Looks at him *
In account to three, we try pulling it together, okay?

...sure.

GET THEM!

One.

Please...

Two.

* Dodges a laser *
Pumpkins, can you hurry it up?!

THREE!

The two both pushed the lever downwards the balloon started flying to the air.

DON’T JUST STAND THERE, KEEP FIRING!

The crystal knights started firing towards the balloon. Just as they thought they were out of reach however... one of the crystal knights get a lucky shot and crystalizes a part of the balloon.

I-I, did it?!

You sure did!
Keep following them, we can’t lose track of them now!

What happened?!

WE GOT HIT!

WE ARE GOING TO CRASH!

NOOOO!
* Hugs Artender *
I don’t want to die!

WE CAN- WE CAN STILL MAKE IT!

But they couldn’t. The balloon hit a bunch of trees and started falling. Everyone braced themselves for impact. When Artender opened his eyes, there were dusts everywhere. He noticed G lying down next to him, unconscious again.

G! G, WAKE UP!

Ugh...

Artender looked around the place for the others. Most importantly, for his kids. He noticed the basket flipped upside down.

EMILY!
* Tries to push the basket *
ARE YOU THERE?!

When he was done pushing, he saw Hood protecting Emily by hugging her. He was so confused.

Hood?!
* Picks up Emily from her hands *
What were you doing?!
And... why did you save her?

* coughs *

Well, pumpkin.
We are on a truce.
If the little pumpkin gets hurt, what else would I have to bargain you with?

Artender was pissed but he couldn't focus on Hood too much as Emily opened her eyes and looked at Artender.

D-dad?

Are- are you alright, Emily?!

* coughs *
I'm fine...
What did... what did Ms. Hood mean by that?

...you wouldn't want to know.

Now that everyone was safe, Artender took a deep breath and looked around him. It looked like they were inside a forest. He couldn't tell which exact forest they were in, but it wasn't the Enchanted Forest.

I don't want to ruin this moment for you dude, but we should get running.
They could be on our tail at any moment.

Artender looked back at the city he used to call home one last time and followed G's lead.

Meanwhile, Clara was still on her way to the Crystal Kingdom. This little town was once her home but now, it was the center point of a giant kingdom. Even though, she missed the simplicity of her old life, she was still more than happy to serve her one and only beloved queen... but she was worried.

Even though she got back to the kingdom to help the wounded knights... that was merely just an excuse. She just didn’t want to get back home with another failure attached to her name... she already lost the fight against a crazy scientist girl, she wasn’t going to screw up another mission.

But her thoughts were interrupted as she realized they arrived at the Crystal Kingdom. She took a deep breath and tried to think happy thoughts. At least she was home now.

She parked her car and got out of it. She told her group to heal the wounded ones and slowly walked towards the castle. She noticed the broken-down fountain, they had to fix that soon as well. To her surprise though, she noticed her comrade, Lydia May, running towards her all worried and panicked.

CLARA, CLARA!

Sigh, what happened Lydia?
We are already struggling well enough.

I-I can see that, but this is really important!

Okay, spill it.

The queen wants to see you and uhm... I don’t think she’s all that happy.

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
HOME SWEET HOME
VIDDO3K
MIDASGOLDGUYIDK1

CHAPTER 26: HOME SWEET HOME

Today is not a good day for the people of Planet Perdiah. Crystal Kingdom, inside the super-secret prison room once again. Sarpo was worried about many things since his talk with Maizie yesterday. He still couldn't wrap his head around why Maizie would want to use his robotic parts when she already reigns over Perdiah with her crystal knights; why focus on that when she can brainwash people? He shook his head to focus on other matters. Such as how his beloved was doing.

Hey Cloe, you alright?

I- I am trying to be.
Thanks for asking though.

I... see. You know that we cannot just stand here and do nothing, right?
We must come up with some sort of plan!

Yes, and I have been thinking of some-

Sshhh…
* Whispers *
Let's keep it quiet for now.
We can't risk the guards hearing our plans.

* Gets a bit embarrassed *

Good call, hon. So… what can we do?

Hm...
* Tries to stretch his arm *
I think I can break open your locks with force.

Well, what can we do after we are freed though?
The whole building is filled with brainwashed knights.

That's what I'm trying to figure out.
Now let me see if I can find anything useful in here-

Ms. Spades! Ms. Spades!

At your service!

Ugh… shut it. I don't have time to look after the MPC crew. You two have an extra hour of duty.

Aww…

This sucks!

Don't give me that, you have no idea what's going on right now!

Yes ma'am…

* Watching what was happening outside * Huh… strange. I wonder what ticked her off so bad… Do you think she's mad some of us got away?

Who cares? I just hope that means our friends are safe and sound.

Yeah, you are right, hon.

Sarpo continues looking around the room and notices a crack in the ground.

What is this now…

Oh?

I found some sort of crack in the ground, Cloe.

Sarpo lightly hits it with his robotic arm, and it causes a hole to appear at that exact spot.

Well… I guess that's something.

Sarpo takes a deep breath and leans back to the Wall he was shackled at.

Welp, I'm stumped.

Don't say that hon. Surely there's another way.

Yeah, you are probably right…

Cloe was in a thinking mood as well. She didn't want her beloved to push himself further, not while he had so many things in mind.

I... think I have an idea, hon.

Oh, what is it?

You can break it open and leave through the hole, maybe?

No, never.

Why not-

I'm not leaving you here, Cloe.

Well, what if I was disguised as a crystal Knight then?

Huh? How do you plan on doing that?

Well, I noticed almost all crystal knights wearing helmets on their heads. What if we secretly get a hold of one of their helmets and trick them to get intel from them?

That's… a really good idea, wow. Good thinking, Cloe!

* Blushes * Thanks, sweetie. We can both pretend to be crystal knights!

No, that's too risky. She obviously has me kept here for a reason. Me also getting crystallized with you would cause even more suspicions.

Yeah… you might be right, sweetie.

The two looked at the Windows at the same time. How nice of the queen to add that. While they had a plan in mind now, all they hoped for was for their friends to be alright.

I just want to know what happened to this child!

Why should I tell you, anyway? It's not like it'll solve anything!

This… has been going on for a few days. Ever since G, Emily, Artender and Hood left the remains of Diamond City, there's been constant bickering between the latter two, and it's always about Emily's affiliation with Maizie.

Could you two stop… arguing? Just for once, please…

I would, if only this PUNK would tell me what's going on!

Like I care! I didn't even know you existed until yesterday! Besides, what're you going to do when I tell you?"

G sighs, apologizes to Emily, and decides that it would be in their best interests to rest for the night, it was getting dark, and everyone was tired. Artender kept trying to comfort Emily while also looking to squeeze some answers from Hood, who just wouldn't collaborate. After they were done settling down near a small lake, they could all finally rest.

Mr. Doodle? You look very tired…

Oh? Don't worry Emily! I just…
*yawns *
I just need some goodnight’s rest.

I hope Mr. Stoked and the others are okay.

... Yeah, me too, Emily, me too.
But I don't think you should worry too much, Bushra’s absolutely the most stubborn guy I know, and Sarpo and Cloe are a great power duo, they'll manage!

Hehe, you're right!

Well then, Emily, please go and rest, tomorrow's going to be another long day of more walking.

I hope we’ll reach the town soon…

Don't worry… It's not too far from here… Just a Few hours…

As the next morning came, G got up earlier to set up an actual plan, should they need one, and once the other three woke up, he explained it to them.

... So, in short, the idea is that we go to Mercia to gather resources or whatnot, and maybe even find someone that might tag along, and once we're reaaa…

“Uh, pumpkin? Go on?”

Let him think, for Perdiah’s sake-
G, GET DOWN!

Everyone quickly ducked, cowering their heads. They then notice that they're being followed by the terrifying Crystal Knights. G by himself wouldn't really stand a chance, and the others aren't exactly skilled fighters by comparison, so they all decide to run away.

Scatter around! They must be close!

Ughh… I wish Clara was here to guide us...

She's probably too busy trying to get along with the Queen right now, quit whining!

It’s not your turn, Bluey, not today! (Eugh,
that was horrible!)”

Being well acquainted with the wildlife of the forests, G was quick to find tools that would help him, and the rest get away; he found some conveniently placed red, cube shaped berries, that would explode into a puff of mist if hit hard enough.

He throws these peculiar berries at the Knights, who take a step back in confusion, trying to get the mist off their eyes, while the quartet makes a run for it.

Good thinking, G! How did you know how to do that?”

Well...

“Let’s just say, I know a thing or two about wildlife.”

Unbelievable.

Clara’s worst nightmare has come to pass. Her beloved queen was mad at her.

I took the time and resources to put together the best scout team I could, and it all goes out the window!?

M-my queen, please understand-

You couldn’t even capture a scientist, let alone MPC’s puny resistance!

I-I’m sorry, I just thought…

And worst of all... you disobeyed my orders.
I will not allow that mistake to happen again.
* Looks at Clara *
Is that understood?

…

Sigh… Don't look at me like a lost puppy, Clara.
I know you did what you could.

I… I'll make up for my mistakes.
Give me any order, this time I swear I won't fail!

(Heh, she's so easily swayed, I almost feel bad.)
Well, my friend, why won't you start by making sure Mr. Fields and his lovely dovely not-wife are where they should be?

Of course, my Queen.
I'll go immediately.

Clearly, the Queen was mad, and Clara could not stand it; she was the cause of it, she thinks to herself. This time, though, it was different, she wasn't just angry, she was furious. To make sure it wouldn’t happen again, Clara decided it would be in her best interest to make sure the MCP duo was secured in the cell; only the sweet Perdian lord above knew what would happen if that were not the case.

Surely enough, the couple was there, so after telling the nearby guards to be more careful than ever, she decides to go back to her quarters.

She lies down on her brand-new bed, constructed by the finest artisans in the Crystal Kingdom, and it was built just for her, in the Queen's words.

Do I really deserve this? I've failed her…
* shakes her head *
No, put yourself together, I can't dwell too much on it, I must fix my mistakes, I must make her happy.

Somewhat determined to clear herself in her beloved Queen's eyes, yet still feeling a little defeated, she decides to rest for the night.

Man, I miss bossing around my two lovely idiots… hehe…
Hopefully that fish fanatic is treating them better than I did.

Back in the cell where Sarpo and Cloe are, the guards took a small break from their very mundane task, so the lovely two finally have some time to talk properly.

Are you sure about this… plan?

Don't worry hon, I'll be fine! You know me, too stubborn to lose!

I just think this plan is a bit surreal, are you absolutely sure it will work?

You gotta trust me, Cloe, I know what I'm doing; besides, it's been a while since I've put a plan to practice, you have absolutely no idea how badly I've been waiting for an opportunity like this!

You don't change a bit, eh?
Just as excitable as ever… Alright then, let's hear it.

The plan was the following:

So, the plan will be like this-

-Cut to a future scene-

We will wait until there's only one crystal Knight guard on duty.
* overhears sounds coming from the room *
Hey, what's going on over there?!

"When we get their attention, we will try to knock him out!"

What's all this-

Sarpo makes him trip with his robotic leg and the crystal Knight and the knight plummets to the ground. He wasn't unconscious yet.

Why you little-

Cloe kicks him with her foot to finally knock him out. Sarpo quickly stretched his arm to open Cloe's locks. She was free for now.

"The next step is the trickiest part; while I dispose of the body, you will pretend to be crystallized. It's only a matter of time until someone notices the absence of the guard."

* picks up the helmet *
Ugh… this is so yucky to even hold!
* Looks at Sarpo *
What did you do with the body, hon?
You didn't just throw it somewhere, did you?

Well…
* points at the hole *
Yeah.

Oh... that's… Don't you think that's very messed up?
These were all regular people before Maizie crystallized them!

Cloe… I know this isn’t the right thing to do but we are out of options now!
It's do or die!

You are right, unfortunately.

The two overheard the sounds of crystal knights running towards the room, their time had run out. Cloe looked at the still in shackles Sarpo.

I- I don't know what to say, this is all just so sudden…

Sarpo stretches his arm and gently pets her head, giving her a bright smile.

I know, Cloe.
I swore I would never leave your side from the day we reunited but...

this is all for the greater good.
I'm sure your guidance will help our friends a ton.
I... I love you-

FREEZE! What's going on here?

Cloe looked back at the two crystal knights with shock on her face. She hoped she didn't blow her cover already.

"And the final step... just take care of yourself, Cloe. Don't engage further if they get suspicious of you, don't get into needless trouble, That's all."

I have been crystallized and now made to serve our beloved queen.

The queen never ordered us to crystallize you or your associate! Something is awfully wrong here!

W-well… a guard arrived at the room and crystallized me without the queen's consent. And of course, the queen "dealt" with him.

Huh…

I think she's speaking the truth! You know how brash Mark used to be! I can totally see this happening.

Hm... Alright, you got me. Sorry for the inconvenience, Ms. Meow. I know the queen gets very angry when we are "rude" to newbies.
Cloe looks at Sarpo and notices him winking at her, the plan went flawlessly.

We will have to call for a new guard to look after Sarpo though.

Yeah, yeah. You can do that.

Jerk.

The female guard left to call for backup while the other guard told Cloe to come with him. It looked like they were about to join back with the rest of the crystal knights. She looked back at Sarpo again. She couldn't bear to leave the love of her life all alone in that cell, but she remembered what Sarpo last told her, not again…

"This is for the greater good." She waved her one last goodbye for the time being and closed the door, hoping to visit Sarpo soon. Hopefully, if the plan goes accordingly, everything will be over in no time, they can reunite once more.

Fortunately, the plan was a success; now Cloe will have to serve the Queen for the meantime, and Sarpo will wait for his chance.

You know what?
If we keep running away like this, we won't get anything done!

Well, do you have any ideas then, smarty pants?!

I could ask the same to YOU, hooded freak!
* Looks at G *
Come on, G. Back me up here!

...

Gosh darn it, G!

Actually, I might have an idea.

Now?

Yes, you remember my old house?
Back in Town Mercia?

Oh yeah, I sure do... I don’t have too many fond memories of that place though.

Oh you must have hit your head somewhere.

Excuse me?

Do you have an idea of just how OBVIOUS that is!?
Of course they're going to look in Mercia, ‘cause that's one of the few places they haven't conquered yet!”

Is there anywhere else we can hide then, huh!?

How about... an underground hiding spot?

... What?

Oh, oh, like an underground bunker!

Exactly like that!
They're going to expect us to be in town Mercia, not under town Mercia!

Huh… Not bad.

See? Told ya it was a good idea.

Hey, you didn’t say anything about an underground bunker!
I’m not giving you any credit for that.

Grr... fine, you are stubborn.

Can we make the bunker Robert shaped?

And thus, the MPC crew (plus Hood) officially had a goal in mind. Construct an underground bunker, get survivors to safety, and prepare them for the eventual war against Queen Maizie! Who knew what tales lied ahead of them.

Presented By:
The TE:R Team
TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
#1
27
GENESIS OF A NEW ERA
TURTLEDOODLE1
FALIN

CHAPTER 27: GENESIS OF A NEW ERA

It was a troublesome day at Planet Perdiah. Ever since Cloe left Sarpo all by himself in that room, she's been feeling sick all over. She knew this was the right thing to do but her stomach couldn't handle all the pressure. Not to mention, being watched by other crystal knights 24/7 wasn't exactly ideal as well.

-but then I asked her "Hey, why did the chicken cross the road?"

* Sigh *
Let me guess.
She guessed correctly?

(confused) H-How did you know?

Dude, you have been telling the exact same joke since we became crystal knights.
It got old.

Gah, this is why I didn't want you as my partner!
I kindly asked the queen to reconsider but nooo!

Um, excuse me?

Oh, what's up, Ms. Meow?
Sorry for that earlier.

Well, it’s alright... I think.
Where are we going exactly?

Well, whenever we have a recruit, the queen tells us to bring them over to the cafeteria.

Yeah, that way new recruits can befriend each other without any interruptions.
Besides a few instances, of course.

Hm... thanks for the info.

The three continued walking down the halls until they arrived at the cafeteria. Cloe was both shocked and scared of what she was looking at. There were so many crystal knights walking around the place, more than she could have possibly imagined. “We have to stop this menace before she crystallizes everyone!” she thought to herself. Despite that, however, the cafeteria didn’t look half bad. The crystal knights there also seemed pretty chill with each other.

Here we are!

Yup!
If you have any issues with the place, you can tell them to the veteran crystal knight on watch!

Okay, enough talk.
Let’s go back to guarding Sarpo.

Agreed.
Good luck, Ms. Meow!

T-thank you!
But who’s the-

Before she could finish her sentence, Cloe notices the crystal knight they were talking about. The white hat, the green scarf, the fishing rod... it was Bushra, standing idly for who knows how long. Cloe couldn’t believe her eyes. She looked around to make sure no one was suspicious of her and rushed towards Bushra. She was happy to see a familiar face around these parts.

Sorry, you can’t leave here for now-

Bushra’s eyes widen.

Ms. Kitty Cat is that you?!

Y-yes!
It’s me, Bushra!

Bushra reaches for a hug and Cloe hugs him back.

I can’t believe you are here!
* Quickly looks around *
G and the others are here too?!

...No, thankfully.

“Thankfully”?

* panics *
I-I meant “sadly”.
Sorry, hehe.

Cloe could tell Bushra was getting suspicious of her. Cloe nervously smiled at him, but she could tell he was thinking of something in his head. Was this really the end? But then, Bushra smiled back at her and laughed.

Oh man!
You really gotta be careful with your words in this place!
* whispers *
I accidentally said, “Darn you, Maizie!” one time after losing a game of chess and got beaten to a pulp!

O-okay!
* Fake laughs *
If you say so, Bushra.

Yeah...

Cloe notices him looking upset.

I wish G and the others were here too.
This place isn’t so bad, right?

Sureeeee.

* Looks over her shoulder *
Yo Terry, can you take over watch duty for a bit?
I just met back with one of my old friends!

Oh, sure thing.
Be back by 6pm though.

Thanks dude, you are the best.

Bushra looks back at Cloe.

Well then, Ms. Kitty Cat!

“We have a lot of catching up to do!”

Meanwhile, outside the Crystal Kingdom, two people were running away from a group of crystal knights. The two were trying their hardest to not get hit by their lasers as well as trying to protect a gemstone they just discovered.

* Holding his headphones *
You said there weren’t any crystal knights in this place!

Oh, give me a break!
They obviously bumped into us by accident!

A laser almost hits Hood’s arm as she shakes in fear.

OH !?#%!

Hey, you can’t say that!

WHY NOT?!

G tries blocking a laser with his hammer but quickly remembers that he couldn’t use it anymore before it was too late.

Are we there yet?

No response from Hood.

Uh... Hood?

Hood was focused on a spot on the ground filled with leaves. G realized what she was trying to do.

Almost… NOW!

Hood pushes G and herself to their left as the crystal knights all fell into the hole, disguised with leaves, in front of them. Their trap worked!

Holy crap, it worked!

Well...
* Shows off *
You can thank lil’ ol’ me for that!

(annoyed) It was partially Artender’s idea too, you know?

Yes, but I’m the brains of this operation!

(annoyed) Whatever.
* Looks back at the gemstone they were carrying *
Man, I’m glad nothing bad happened to this thing.

Yea, that would have been a disaster otherwise.

G slowly walks towards the hole looks at the trapped crystal knights below.

Pumpkin, what are you doing?

G ignores her and tries to talk with the crystal knights.

H-hello there everyone!
Please remain calm-

Suddenly all of them started shooting their crystal beams towards G and he quickly backs away.

Nice going, smarty pants.
What were you trying to do?!

I-I was just going to tell them we weren't going to leave them here by themselves!
We can supply them with food until we can get them to normal!

We don't need your dumb food, we only serve our beloved queen!

All crystal knights shouted "YES!" in unison.

Well, pumpkin.
We tried your way.
* Pushes G away from the hole and looks at the crystal knights *
Screw you losers too!
Have fun rotting there!
HA HA!

G was obviously hurt by their response but teaming up with Hood was somehow worse for him.

Why did you do that for?!
These are all still innocent people!

Innocent or not, they all still want us dead.
Or worse, become like them.
* Looks at the gemstone in awe *
So quit your yapping and follow me!
I can't wait to see Artender's face when we get back to the base.

“Oh geez, Hood. It’s too dangerous to go out there.”
Well, look at us now!

Hood looked over to G to see his reaction, but he was still as monotone as ever.

Yo, yo, pumpkin.
Whazzup?

Oh, uhh... nothing much.
I just want to get back to the base already.

(sarcasm) Well I do too, it’s OBVIOUSLY very dangerous out here!

Ugh, knock it off.

It’s so funny how much of a pushover these new knights are.
How did your friend even get crystallized by these morons?

Hood.
Shut it.

* Chuckles *
Ooh, did I hit a nerve?!

I do not want to talk.

Alright then, pumpkin.
Your call.

The two continued walking in the woods for a few more minutes until they spotted a tree stump. And right next to it, there was a familiar face waiting for them.

Hi, Artender!
We are back!

Hi, G!
Oh, thank goodness you guys are safe!
Did you find the gem you were looking for?

* Pushes G to the side *
As a matter of fact, we did!

* Sigh *
Hi to you as well, Hood.

How are the kids by the way?

Emily is sleeping now while Teo is just hanging around but rest assured, they are both okay.

So, she won't be able to watch us put this thing to use?
That's a darn shame.

Well... Emily can just enjoy the result instead.
(Besides, her well-being doesn't concern you.)

What was that?

N-nothing.

Artender opens the stump like a hatch and reveals a slide underneath.

See you two on the other side.

The two watch as Artender jumps onto the slide and disappears into pure darkness.

Oh man, this is my favourite part!

Really now?
I never saw the appeal of it, it's impractical too.

Oh, don't ruin this too!

Alright, alright, fine.
I will get on your stupid slide.

The two jumped inside the passage and slid all the way down to their newest base. Even though G suggested building a base underground, he still had claustrophobia from way back when. But he wanted his

friends (and frenemy) to be safe from the Crystal Queen. Thankfully the place they built wasn't as claustrophobic as he imagined. After they finally landed on their feet, G looked around their new base of operations. It hasn't been long since they started living here but they made the most of it, given their limited resources. But with this gemstone now on their fingertips, they could move on to the next step of their plan.

Now that you guys are here…
* Reaches out his hand *
Give me the gemstone, Hood.

Why can't I hold it 'till you pumpkins get that machine set up?

Because I said so.

Hmpf…

Hood reluctantly gives Artender the gemstone.

Fine, here's your stupid stone thing.

* Takes the gemstone *
Alright, good.
Now, I will put this thing to its rightful place with G.

Well, what about me, pumpkin?!

I-I don't know.

* Quickly looks around and notices PotaTeo eating stuff in the kitchen *
You can hang out with Teo for a bit.

Psttt….
* Chuckles *
You can’t be serious!

Hood notices Artender not laughing back.

Wait, you serious?

Do I look like I am not?

* Shrugs *
Alright, pumpkin.
Your call.

Good.
* Fake coughs *
Anyway, let’s go G.

Right behind you, dude!

Artender grabs one of the torches put on the walls and starts talking business.

G... What exactly happened on the mission?

Well, we argued a bit until we came across the gem.
We quickly got out of the cave but accidentally bumped into Crystal knights.

Where are those Crystal Knights now?

Fell into one of the traps you and Hood setup.
I told them we would still give them food... even though we are in a dire situation.

Well, you still did the right thing so I can't complain that much.
* Quickly looks around to see if anyone else was around *
Do you trust Hood?

Not at all.
She's as shady as they get!

Glad we are on the same page.
I don't trust her one bit either, but we are unfortunately stuck with her for the time being.

For goodness’ sake, she wanted to name our group " The Vengeful Rubies"!

To be frank, I don't mind the name all that much.
It's at least better than something like "MPC3".

* Dramatically gasps *
Put some respect on Sarpo's name!

* chuckles *
Relax G, I'm exaggerating.
Sarpo’s a cool dude and all that but he absolutely sucks at naming things.

Yeah, yeah, I’m aware...
* Quickly shakes his head *
But yeah, about Hood.
We need to get info from her about the crystallizer too.
And the Crystal Queen in general.

It seems like we need to play the long game with her unfortunately.
She didn't say a single thing about Maizie or what her deal was in the entire time we kept her prisoner.

...Good point.

Plus, we still need to decide on who will be on guard duty for the rest of the day.
It’s unguarded now and I’m not going to risk anything.

Before G could respond, he noticed that they were already at their destination. The power supply! They found it in one of their recent travels. They found lightbulbs as well, but they couldn't power them up for obvious reasons. Still, they put the lightbulbs on the cave ceilings just in case a day like this would come. With this gemstone, they had a shot at living like normal people... as normal as they

could live with the ongoing events, at the very least.

And we are here!

Artender gently puts the gemstone in its power module and just as he fully tucks it in, all lightbulbs in the ceiling start lighting up. They finally had functioning lights!

Woah!
It works!

It sure does, alright!
* Takes a deep breath *
Man, I missed this.
I forgot how to live like a normal person almost!

Before G could crack a joke about Artender, the two overhear the sounds of glass breaking. The two quickly rush back to the entrance of their base and see Hood and PotaTeo trying to clean up a mess they made in the kitchen.

Sigh, why am I not surprised?
My troublemaker son and our old enemy not getting along.

Oh, don't give me that!
I wanted to use the blender, but he threw a pot at me!
Artender looks at PotaTeo with judgemental eyes.

Is it true, Teo?

* Nervously nods*

Sigh, alright.
* Points towards the ladder leading to the exit *
You two are going to guard the entrance for a few hours.

What?! I'm going to be with the potato?!
AGAIN?!

PotaTeo flang his arms around like a kid having a temper tantrum. G thought he radiated "Come on, are you serious dad?!" Energy.

Yes, you heard me.
Now, get to it.
I don’t want either of you slacking off.

G and Artender both could hear Hood mumbling to herself as she and PotaTeo started climbing up.

You sure this is a good idea?

Yeah? Why wouldn’t it be?

Well, you don’t want Emily to be with Hood So I figured you wouldnt want Teo to be with her as well.
Who knows what she could do to him?!

Oh, that. I'm sure Teo can handle himself if Hood tries something funny.
My boy survived in the Nor Plane while dealing with her.

But she had one of those red rings back then!
What if she does something with those again?!

I highly doubt it.
We destroyed all the ones we had after Hood pulled that little stunt.

I... see.
Though even so, back then there was... there was...

(Oh no...)

-Bushra with them.

Uhhh-

If I had my powers, I could have saved him, Artender!

Artender knew he had to change the topic, but he didn’t know how.

H-hey, buddy!

(almost about to cry) What?!

We will rescue him soon, don't worry.

* Sniffs *
Y-you really think so.

Yeah! Besides, we are one step closer to taking back our world!

Yeah, I guess you are right...

G wipes off his tears and looks back at Artender.

Thanks for the help, dude.

It was my pleasure.

Say though, I’m surprised how well you were able to take control of the whole situation back there.

Heh...
* Chuckles *
Well, let’s just say “parenting” was a big factor in all of this.

I don’t think I get what you are trying to say.

* Smiles *
That’s fine.

Artender starts thinking about that word again. “Parenting”. He felt like he was forgetting about something... or someone.

Oh shoot!

What is it, Artender?

I forgot to check up on my daughter.
Can you wait here for a few seconds?

Oh, sure.
Take your time.

Thank you.

Artender quickly rushes to the room in the cave fully dedicated to his kids. He quietly knocked on the door and entered the room. Emily was still tucked in her bed, sleeping through their hard times. Artender hoped she would have a bright future ahead of her despite the all the problems they were facing. He sat on her bed and kissed her on the forehead. Before he was about to leave, he felt someone gripping his hand. It was a half-awake Emily.

Dad?

Yes, sweetie?

I’m... I’m scared.

Oh, don’t worry little one.
We are safe from the mean crystal people in here.

No... it’s not them...

Oh?

It’s Ms. Hood.
She’s such a meanie!

I’m... aware, Emily.
But we need her if we want to go back to how things used to be.

I understand...
* yawns *
I am ‘eepy again...

* Pats her on the head *
Goodnight again, Emily.

Goodnight dad.

Artender got up and slowly closed the door. Since they escaped from Diamond City, Artender noticed something was off with her. She seemed to know both Maizie and Hood despite her files. When he adopted Emily, he investigated her files but saw nothing suspicious in them. While previous hoodsters were logged under the same umbrella, Emily's status was uncertain. He did not want to believe his daughter could have possibly joined with the hoodsters while they were determined to take them down. He wanted to believe she heard stories about the two from the time she was an orphan living by herself in Diamond City. He shook his head soon after. He had to stay focused on planning first. This could change their fates forever, so he had to be extra focused.

Sorry, I am back.
Took longer than I expected.

It's fine, Artender.
Sit down.

Alright then.

Artender turns around and quickly picks up Perdiah's map. It was planning time!

Can you give me a quick rundown again?

Of what?

Of the plan.

Oh, alright.
First, we will continue going on small scouting missions to find unaffected people and bring them to safety aka here!

Do we have enough room for everybody?

Not currently but with more manpower, I'm sure we can make room for more people!
Heck, we might even find some outside help along the way!
Like Array!

G felt sick in the stomach after hearing his name. Everything was moving so fast that he almost forgot about his friend’s whereabouts. They had to find him before it was too late.

We will interrogate Hood and learn everything about the crystallizer Technology and Maizie herself.
And after we have enough people, we can try to reach the temples all around Perdiah to wish Upon something that can finally end this nightmare once and for all!

And save Bushra, right?!

Yes, that too!

Sweet!
You really did think everything through, huh?

I sure did! At least, I hope I did...
There are of course some factors that could ruin our plans, but I like to not think about those... At least for now.

Like what?

"Like what Maizie plans on doing to us..."

Then I told Lydia that she was pretty, and she believed it!
I got off from that night’s truth or dare challenge cuz of her!
Isn’t that so funny?!

* Fake laughs *
Hehe, yeah...

What about you, Kitty Cat?
Surely, you have some fun stories to tell as well!

I...

* Scratches her head *
I don’t really have one.

Huh, that’s odd.
I know you probably didn’t get here in the best of terms but trust me, this place is awesome.

Hm... Bushra, can I ask you something if you don’t mind?

Oh, sure.
Go for it.

Well, can we leave the castle at any given point?

Oh yeah!
The queen mostly has the kids and the ones who can’t fight for themselves to stay outside the castle.
The others all have designated rooms, like us two!

Fascinating…
* Coughs *
Another question, do you miss the time before you were... crystallized?

* Puts his hand on his chin *
Hm... I think I do.

Sure, having fun with G and beating up bad guys was fun, but this place is so much better!
I just wish our other friends were here too.

So, a part of the real Bushra is still within him, Cloe thought to herself. She just had to tap into it more.

Well, this was a nice talk, Bushra.
Now I must go and do... Crystal knight stuff
* Stands up *
I hope our other friends will also join us soon.

I hope so too!
Take care, Kitty Cat!

...You too, Bushra.

Bushra also stands up and yells at Terry.

TIME OUT, GLASSES MAN!
I'M READY TO TAKE OVER THE SHIFT!

Oug, finally!
* Walks towards Bushra *
What did your cat friend say?

Oh well, it's the usual Kitty Cat stuff.
She was feeling a bit down I think so I made her feel better.

She’s struggling to being a Crystal knight, so I totally get it.

Mhm...
* Watching Cloe as she exits the cafeteria *
I hope you are right about that.
Something feels off about her.

Huh?
What do you mean?

Before Terry could respond, they saw Lydia entering the cafeteria while waving at the two.

Hi guys!
Any news from Clara?

Not yet. Hi Lydia!
I will have to cut this short cuz I'm on a shift right now.
Toodles!

Alright then. Goodbye, Bushra!
* Looks over to Terry *
Hi, big guy!
What’s up?

Hi to you too, Lydia.

I’m doing fine, thanks for asking.
Tee-hee!
* Looks around *
Say, what do you think Clara’s up to?

Beats me.
The boss has been feeling down since the queen talked down to her.

The poor girl.
I can’t imagine being in her place.

Yeah, cuz you would definitely cry if that happened to you instead.

* Blushes from embarrassment *
Hmpf.

* Feels a bit bad *
Well... we can look for the boss together if you are feeling up to it.

S- sure!

My guess is that she’s probably training by herself somewhere to prove she’s “worthy” or whatever.

A likely theory.
* Grabs his arm *
Come on, let’s go!

“Lead the way, big guy!”

This sucks.

PotaTeo, for the first time, gave her a thumbs up. He was getting sick of waiting around a stump with someone he didn’t trust, no less.

If only we could do something to pass the time...

Hood looked around and saw G’s old house. PotaTeo saw her Hood looking at the house and shook his head in disapproval.

Ugh, why not?!
We are still gonna guard the stupid stump anyway.

PotaTeo looked back at the stump and finally gave in to his curiosity. Despite being with the team for so long, he never got around to spending time in Town Mercia. At least, what remained of it. PotaTeo reluctantly gave her another thumbs up.

Sweet!
Glad you came around, potato pumpkin.

Hood picked PotaTeo up and the two entered the broken-down house. On the surface, it didn’t seem too bad. But the more they explored, the more the cracks started to show their face.

Eugh, this place smells awful!

Hood looks around and sees a broken pipe lying around on the ground. Almost like it was used for some sort of fight.

Yeah, I don’t think I want to stay here for much longer.

The two left the house as quick as they entered it in the first place.

Can’t believe the green pumpkin left this place like this!
Such carelessness, such awfulness!

Hood looked over to PotaTeo for his opinions, but he was too busy drawing something on the mud with a stick. He was drawing his family as stick figures.

Ooh so that’s how you can communicate with others, eh?
And I thought your existence was worthless!

PotaTeo didn’t want to pay attention to her and continued drawing.

I’m sure Artender only keeps you around because of pity!
Because why pretend to be their son in the first place?
You are a potato for Perdiah’s sake, you don’t have feelings!

PotaTeo was still ignoring her, and it was starting to get on Hood’s nerves.

Hey, potato!
I’m talking to you!

PotaTeo looked at Hood and pointed at the mud.

Eh?
Are you gonna show me your terrible drawing skills?

PotaTeo rolled his eyes and pointed at the mud yet again. Right next to the Tender family drawing, there was a text saying “You suck!”.

Oh, you little-
* Grabs PotaTeo *
I’m gonna-

Before the two were about to fight, they heard sounds of a wood cracking. The two readied themselves for a fight. Even though they hated each other’s guts, taking care of intruders was priority one. But a small frog jumped out of the bushes instead.

What the-

PotaTeo was overjoyed and went to pet the creature while Hood just wanted it dead. Hood sighed in relief, at least they didn’t have to fight anyone besides themselves-

OPEN FIRE!

Before Hood could process what was going on, a potion hit PotaTeo and stunned him in place. Hood was frightened for once.

I got him, boss!
I got him!

Awesome job, Joyce.

The Rascals jump out of the woods and greet their old boss.

Hi there, Hood.
How are things going?

Hood quickly looked over to PotaTeo. He was still stunned in place. She had to stall for time before she could make her next move.

Do not even think of running away from us!
You are surrounded.
* Points at PotaTeo *
We will kill your little associate if you try anything funny.

Hood had to play along with him to get more time.

Oh, him?
Pfft...Who cares, I still have the little girl to use as bargain.

PotaTeo was quite saddened by her words despite still being stunned.

* chuckles *
I never imagined this day would come.
To think we served you for all those years... only for you to be destroyed by the very people you once commanded.

Quit the big talk, eye patch pumpkin!

I- you don’t even know my name?!

Uhm...boss?
Please calm down!

Shut up, Murray.

Yeah, shut up you bald freak, you don’t get to talk to him that way!

Murray slowly backed away with sadness in his eyes. Marigold couldn’t help but feel bad for him.

So... you didn’t have the decency to remember our names?!

Sorry tough guy but nah.
Too many hoodsters means I can’t possibly remember all your names.

Oh, but I assure you.
* Points his crossbow towards Hood *
You won’t be remembered after this either.

Meanwhile, Marigold was confused. Who was this lady and what even were “hoodsters”? She had to play along with the other two to find out.

Y-yeah!

Listen to the boss, you jerk!
We are gonna steal from you and... stuff!

Everyone, including Hood, was confused. Hood remembered this girl being a lot tougher back then. She wondered what caused her to be this way.

Now now, let's all be rational here!
* Raises her hands *
See, I don't want to hurt you.

Oh, that's a shame.
* Readies his crossbow *
Because I DO want to hurt you.

Hood slowly walked towards the Rascals with her hands in the air but before they could do anything, Hood takes some mud from the ground and throws it at Markus' face.

UGH!
* Trying to clean his face *
Joyce, stun her!

Before Joyce could also stun her, Hood picked up PotaTeo and got to the slide. She needed help from the other two to defeat these morons. It was their only chance. She didn't even have time to think how nasty her hand was after touching the mud.

Did you hear that?

Y- yeah!
I hope those two aren't fighting!

The two ran towards the ladder but instead saw a tired looking Hood get off the slide with PotaTeo in her hands.

Hood?!
What happened?

It’s the Rascallions!

The what now?

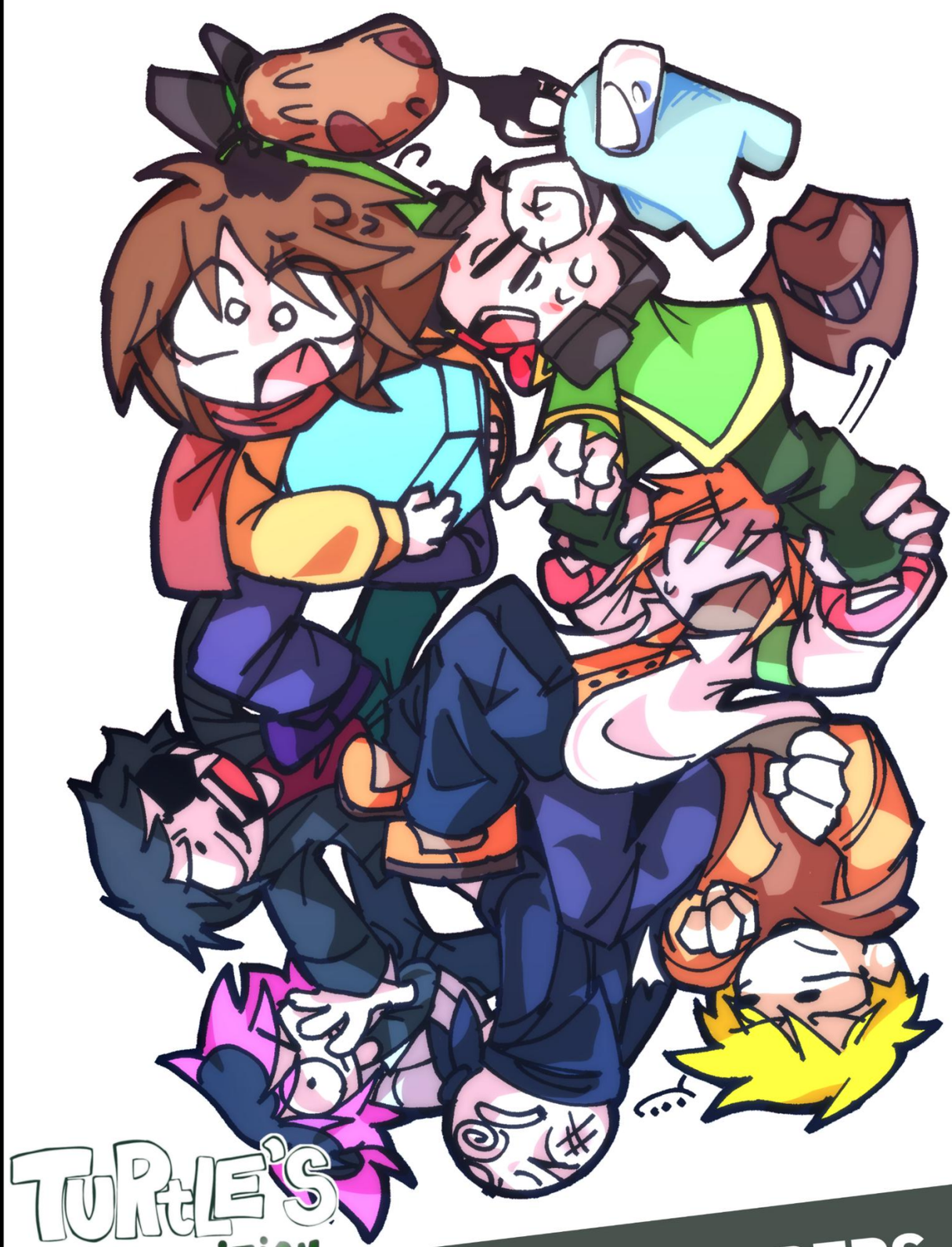
The eyepatch guy, the bald one and orange lady!

Wait, you don’t mean-

Before Artender could finish his sentence, the three were blown away by an explosion. When the dust settled, they saw the slide being destroyed and in the middle of it, there were 3 familiar figures G did not want to face ever again.

Hey G, missed us?

(...who?)



PARTY POOPERS

TURTLEDOODLE1 SOHEKUN

CHAPTER 28: PARTY POOPERS

It was a troubling day on Planet Perdiah. While two factions were fighting each other on the other side of the planet, someone was dealing with an inner conflict with herself. She made it outside the castle to see if there was a way to contact her friends outside. So far, she was out of luck. After hours of research, she decided to take a breather and travel around the kingdom. The last time she saw the outside world was when Maizie invited all of them over for dinner. Little did any of them know it would be the last time they saw each other in one place. The last time she was able to see her boyfriend without anyone standing in their way... Stuck in her thoughts, Cloe almost tripped because of a bunch of crystallized children suddenly appearing in front of her. They were playing catch with each other. Even though they were crystallized, they were still allowed to be kids. Cloe notices an old-looking lady staring at her. Cloe could only assume she was their mother.

Hello?
May I help you?

No need for formalities, dearie.
I recognize you!

Cloe’s tail starts wagging from being worried.

Y-you do?

Yes... You were the founder of Circus Kurza, yes?

Yes, but that was... before I was crystallized.

I’m aware, sweetheart.
No need to panic.
I just wanted to thank you for your hard work way back then.

Oh?

You reunited the Travelers when we were at our lowest.
That dastard Hood tried to split us up, but you stood firm and fought back against her!

T-thank you!
I tried my best.

I’m aware the queen also wants to reunite all species here, but I wanted to especially thank you for those times.

Mama, mama!

What is it, kids?

Come on, join us!
We need another person for the game!

I’m sorry sweetie but I still have stuff to do for the queen.

Aww...

Hey.
What if I join in instead, little ones?
* Looks at the old lady *
As long as your mom is okay with it, at least.

You are free to do as you wish, Ms. Meow.
I’m sure my kittens would be more than happy to have a new playmate.

Yay, new friend!

Awesome!

This will be so much fun!

Thanks again for your efforts, sweetie.

No problem, Ms...?

Misty.
You can just call me, Misty.

Thanks to you as well, Misty.
I will keep your kids safe and sound.

Cloe and the kids waved goodbye to Misty and the four started playing a little game hide and seek. In the midst of all the chaos, Cloe was happy to make a positive change in others’ lives.

Back inside the Vengeful Rubies' base, it was darker than ever before. Presumably, the explosion made the lights go off.

Well, well, well.
Look who we got here!

Markus!
What are you doing here?!

Isn't it obvious now, you bald freak?!

(Confused) Wait, are you talking about me or-

N-no!

Yeah, he's obviously talking about me dude.

(upset) O-oh okay. Sorry.

Anyways...
* Points his crossbow at the Vengeful Rubies *
We originally came here to loot the old house above but then heard your friends arguing with each other.
Talk about a stroke of good luck!

Artender angrily looks at Hood, but Hood kept pointing at PotaTeo, pinning all the blame on him.

Why are you doing this?!
Perdiah’s a mess right now and you three are still going to stick to your old ways?!

Hm...

Yeah! Us fighting each other is meaningless!
There’s this queen called Maizie who wants to hunt down and crystallize all of us!

Wait.
Did you say... Maizie?

Yes!
That’s why we should team up to defeat her once and for all!

* Whispers *
Or... we could show these bozos we are superior and kick their butts!

NO!

Markus was confused but intrigued. Someone that Murray knew was behind this all along. And whether he liked it or not, teaming up with the so called “heroes” would make keep him and his crew much safer in the long run. But... he couldn’t walk back now. He touched his eye patch... reminded himself of the past. Afterwards, he smirked at the helpless Vengeful Rubies.

We have made up our minds.
* Snaps his finger as his teammates readied themselves to fight *
Looks like you are going to have to make a run for it!

H-hold on!
We don't have anything of value to steal from!

But as right as Artender said that the one person he didn't want to be here was carrying the one thing he didn't want these criminals to see.

* Yawns *
Uncle Tender?
* Shows him the gemstone *
Where am I supposed to put this pretty rock-

Emily stopped talking the moment she saw the chaos inside. She was speechless.

* Points at the gemstone *
What... is that?

N-nothing that concerns you!

Meanwhile, Marigold was looking at the gemstone in awe. She knew about these gemstones from her time in the pocket zone.

Boss?

Yes, Joyce?

I know about this gemstone.
It provides an infinite amount of electricity!

Hm...
* Smirks *
Infinite electricity, you say?

YOU ARE NOT TOUCHING HER!

Before Markus could fire an arrow, Artender punched Markus in the head, causing him to fall for a brief moment.

EMILY, GET OUT OF HERE!

GET HER!

EEK!

It was too late for peace now. With Artender and Markus' shouting, everybody in the room started fighting each other.

Murray!
Blow up the entrance so no one can leave!

O-okay, sir!

Oh no, you don’t!

Hood was able to stop Murray from throwing a bomb with a kick to his stomach.

GRRR...
* Looks around *
Joyce! You catch her-

Both Artender and G tried hitting Markus again, but he was able to back away before he was hurt. It was a chaotic mess.

You imbeciles!

* Dodges an arrow *
Sorry Markus but we can’t let you have that gem!

We will take it even if we must DIE for it!

Meanwhile, Emily was running for her life. Both the cowboy scientist and the mechanic were trying to catch her. Both didn’t use their projectiles to not damage the gem and hurt the kid.

Leave me alone!

Sorry kid but we really need the-
* Gets punched on his bald head again *
OW!

Know your place, pumpkin!
* Looks at Emily *
Get out of here kid, go!

...Okay.

Markus says “screw it” in his head and decides to go after Emily himself. He shouted for backup but noticed that both of his teammates were already preoccupied. He suddenly stopped as he saw Artender trying to trip him with his leg. He was holding a broom to use as a weapon.

You again!?

I will not repeat myself again.
* Points at Markus with the broom *
Surrender now or face the consequences!

Oh buddy, we have gone through this same song and dance long enough.
I think you already know my answer to that.

Artender sighs in sadness. He really didn’t want to continue the fight, but he had to for their future.

Very well.

Artender does a quick maneuver as he hits Markus' hand which causes him to drop his crossbow.

You dirty snake!

Markus tried taking back the crossbow, but Artender kept pushing it farther and farther away with the broom. So, Markus decided to attack Artender head on, only to get hit by the broom's pointy side. Markus looked around for backup and saw Joyce.

Joyce, lend me a hand!

I GOT IT!

Artender noticed all the oncoming points coming towards him and braced himself for impact. Only to see that his son, now grown again, blocked all the shots.

What the-

PotaTeo starts rolling towards Joyce which frightens but also disgusts her.

Ugh, what is this unnatural being?!

That's my son you are talking about!

Markus was finally able to take back his crossbow as he pointed right towards Artender's head without him noticing.

Say goodbye, Mr. Dowell!

But before he could take the shot, he felt someone grabbing him from the back.

Let him go, you jerk!

Ugh, you stay out of this!

Markus was trying to hit G, but he was moving like crazy. Not to mention he couldn't exactly hit where he was so he was constantly hitting himself in the process. Thankfully all that noise finally made Artender realize what was going on.

ENOUGH!

As Markus manages to get a hold of G and smashes him to the ground, Artender was there to help. Artender was visibly worried for his friend.

G, are you alright?

I will...
* Coughs *
I will be fine.
You just kick his butt!

* Angrily looks at Markus *
Will do.

Meanwhile, Hood was still bullying Murray by constantly hitting him on his head and not letting him pull out one of his bombs. But then, a potion hits Hood’s head from behind.

UGH!
Who was that?!

Suddenly, Hood notices Joyce appearing next to her as she pushes her to the wall, far away from her friend.

Let him go, you jerk!
* Reaches out her hand *
Are you okay, Murray?

I-I- you are helping me?!
Why... why are you doing this?
You have been acting like this since we got you out of there!
Why...

Because you are my friend!
And I care about you!
* Helps him get up *
Now come on, let’s beat these bozos!

(Still confused) O-okay!

Murray spots G and ducks just in case he attacks with his hammer.

But surprising him, G could only throw a weak punch. He looked dizzy suddenly.

What the-

Ugh...
* Looks at his hands *
Why is this happening to me...

M-Mr. Doodle?!

Run... run away, Emily!

Come here, little one!
We won't bite!
We just need that gem of yours!

No, get away!
You are bad guys!

As Emily started to flee, Joyce realized she had to stun her.

Stay back, Murray!
I got this!

She threw a quick potion at Emily but was shocked to see G jumping in front of her instead. He was now paralyzed, with Emily nowhere to be seen.

BLAST IT ALL!

W-where’s the kid?!

I don’t know but we can’t lose her!

Joyce quickly looks around and notices their boss being surrounded by Hood and Artender. She had to help him.

I will help the boss!
You go find the kid!

Okay!

* Smiles at him *
Good luck!

For the first time ever, Murray realized that he was happy around Joyce for once. He smiled back at Joyce, finally accepting his friend’s new attitude.

Good luck to you too!

Joyce quickly rushed in to save her boss.

* A potion hits him on the head *

URGH!
MY HEAD!

Sorry for this but we really need that gem!

* Tries hitting Joyce but fails *
No can do!

While G was paralyzed, he was still watching the fight go on without him. It almost made no difference with or without him over there... without his powers, he was worthless. Because of this, he was starting to feel like a burden to the group.

Boss, are you alright?!

I’m fine, Joyce.
* Holds her hand and gets up *
At this rate, we will be fighting for hours!
* Notices something *
Wait... where’s Murray?!

I told him to go after the kid!
* Throws another potion at Artender and Hood *
We must protect him!

* Coughs *
The bald one’s gone?!

Seems like it!

* Looks at the corridors *
We have to get him before he catches up to Emily-

Suddenly, Joyce teleports in front of Artender and pushes him back.

We would prefer it if you did not.

WOO!
WAY TO GO, JOYCE!

* Gets embarrassed *
T-thanks, sir!

* Helping the paralyzed G get up *
Okay, this is going nowhere!
We have to end this madness once and for all!

Before he could process what was going on, PotaTeo was knocked away by a... magical card? It was anything like Artender has ever seen before. But he couldn't focus on that as his son was far more important.

Teo, are you alright?!

PotaTeo struggled to move his arms and gave his dad a small thumbs up instead. Artender noticed Hood also getting knocked away but the

same... potion? It was hard to tell what he was looking at in the mist of the battle.

GRR!
Those morons will pay!

Artender looks back at the two Rascals after helping Hood get up. Her and himself were the final resistance.

Give us the gem now and we will spare your lives!

As if!
I know your games, eyepatch pumpkin!
* Readied her fists one more time *
You can’t double cross the double crosser!

* Chuckles *
Very well.

What do we do now, boss?

We just wait and see what they will do next.

* Looks at Artender *
Think you can fight just as well as you can parent?

* Smirks *
Oh, you bet I can!

* Smirks back *
Only one way to find out!

ATTACK!

Meanwhile, inside the Crystal Kingdom, the lone half robot man was wondering what has happened to the love of his life. Not to mention Maizie's reaction to their plan was the tipping point. She either believed it or it was game over for the both of them. He couldn't allow Cloe to be crystallized if Maizie ever found out. He could only hope Cloe was alright. While he was still in his thoughts, he heard sounds of his door knocking. And unsurprisingly, the queen showed up to make fun of him once again.

* Carrying a tool kit *
Hello there, lovebirds!
Who's ready for more testing-

Maizie was shocked. She quickly looked around the room in disbelief. Where was Ms. Meow? And more importantly, who was responsible for this?

Where is Cloe?!

* Pretends to act sad *
She... was crystallized in front of my very eyes by one of your awful crystal knights!

But it doesn’t make any sense!
I didn’t authorize her crystallization!

Maizie turns back around and thinks for a moment. Who could have possibly crystallized her... But then, she looks at the window in the room and starts smiling to herself. Yes... YES... she could turn this to her advantage.

Well, Mr. Fields.
I’m sure you were very distraught after your girlfriend’s crystallization.

Oh yes... I miss her so much...

* Chuckles *
Well then.
You will be happy to know that your girlfriend will help me expand my reign over this meaningless planet.
The peace you and your associates worked so hard to maintain will be broken very soon.
* Points at Sarpo with a screwdriver *
What do you think of that?

My teammates will stop you before you can corrupt more people!
I’m sure of it!

Oh, I wouldn’t be so sure of that.
After all...

Maizie lightly hits Sarpo’s metallic hand with her finger, much to his

dismay.

“I’m only just getting started!”

Uhm... come out, little one!
Don’t worry, I won’t hurt you!

Murray has been looking for Emily since Joyce told him to go find her. He picked up a torch on his way there to make things much easier for himself. While he was still searching, he couldn’t help but wonder... why was he even doing this? Stealing this gem from the heroes of Perdiah just didn’t sit right with him. It wasn’t like the gem could protect them from the crystal knights either. It was all just pointless to him. Suddenly, he heard the sounds of faint steps. Murray knew this had to be Emily. He slowly walked towards the room the noises came from and saw a bed with a few toys lying around on the ground. He crouched and peeked under the bed. She was there.

G- go away!
* Hugs the gemstone *
I won’t let you take this!

No, no, it’s alright!
* Raises his arms *
I don’t want to hurt you!
I promise!

Before Emily was about to run away again, she noticed something about him that none of the other bad guys had. He looked like he was being honest with her. So instead, she slowly got up and sat down on her bed, waiting for a response.

Thank you, little one.
* Notices Robert behind her back *

Hey! What’s that?

...that’s my best friend, Robert.
We go on adventures with him every day.

That’s awesome... what was your name again?

...I’m Emily.

I’m glad to have met with you, Emily.
* Reaches out his hand *
My name is Murray!
Murray Somber.

* Slowly picks up his hand *
Are you... not a bad guy?

...

You seemed like such a mean jerk when I first saw you...

You mean when we just got here?

No... I remember you from...

Emily didn’t know how to describe her feelings, so she touched her heart first and then Murray’s heart second. While that startled Murray

for a second, he quickly figured out what she was talking about.

You were... a hoodster as well?

...yeah.
* Closes her eyes with her hands *
I... I don’t want dad to know about it.
He’s going to throw me out if he knows...
* Starts sobbing *
And I don’t want to be a bad guy like you!

* Sighs *
Emily, I’m... sorry to hear that.
Believe me, it was hard for me too.
But don’t worry...
* Holds her by the shoulders *
I will keep your secret between us.

You really mean that?

Yes, I do.

Emily couldn’t help but hug Murray after the fact. Murray was surprised but oddly happy with this outcome. He missed feeling like this.

T-thank you, Mr. Somber...
You are a cool person!

* Smiles *

Thanks, Emily.

Murray gets up and reaches out his hand to Emily. It was time to change things once and for all!

Come now, Emily...
Let’s go and break up the fight!

* Holds his hand *
O-okay!

And thus, a new friendship was born between two unlikely faces.

GRR, JUST GIVE IT UP ALREADY!

Nuh uh, sorry eye patch pumpkin but it’s staying right here!

* Trying to hit Artender *
Would you stand still?!

Just give it up already!

STOP FIGHTING!

Everyone in the room suddenly looked at the two in shock. Even the paralyzed G and PotaTeo were surprised. Murray and Emily were both carrying the gemstone together.

We must stop fighting, boss!
This could be our one chance at having peace!

Murray, what are you babbling about?!

I mean it, boss!

Yeah, we can all be friends!

Murray are you out of your mind?!
* Grabs the gem forcefully from their hands *
I don’t know what kind of brainwashing they did to you, but we are out of here!

HEY!

* Looks at Joyce *
Joyce, get us out NOW!

On it, boss!

* Trying to stop them *
No, no, you don’t understand!
We can still-

Mr. Somber, no!

Somebody stop that moron!

Before Artender could stop Joyce, the trio were nowhere to be seen. They were teleported away somewhere. But where exactly, the crew had no idea. Everyone was shaken by the encounter. Especially Artender.

Emily, are you alright?!

I’m fine but... I’m...
* Suddenly hugs Artender *
I’m sorry, dad!

Ssshh... it’s alright.
I’m here with you.
Everything is going to be okay...

B-but they took the bright rock!
* Starts crying *
I knew I shouldn’t have trusted bad guys…

One at a time, Emily.
One at a time.
At least now you know not to trust strangers!

At least…

AT LEAST?!

Hood angrily walks over to Artender. She was fuming from anger.

That was our only chance of establishing normality again, but we failed!
Now we must find another one while those three morons are out there wasting its precious power!
Way to go!

Calm down.
Don’t shout next to the kid.

Hood looked like she was about to say so much more stuff but instead she pointed at Artender.

FINE!
But I won’t clean up this place all by myself!

Artender didn’t know what to say to her. Because… she was right. This really wasn’t her fault at all. In fact, it was her family’s doing that they were now stuck like this. The whole place was a mess after the fight. They had to start from scratch all over again. Meanwhile, G and PotaTeo were finally free from the potion’s effects as they helped each other get up. G was moments away from breaking down. Just a few weeks ago, he was one of the most powerful members of his team, always fighting bad guys with his best friend. But now? He couldn’t come to terms with the fact that he was useless to his team now. He couldn’t go on like this for much longer, he had to do SOMETHING to be useful to his team again.

Back at the Crystal Kingdom, Cloe was waving goodbye at Misty and her adorable kids. She had to keep looking for some way to communicate with her teammates. But suddenly, she heard a siren coming from the castle itself. It was telling every crystal knight to come to the castle. This must be important, she thought. She quickly

made it to the castle and started wandering around the corridors. She wondered what was going on. Though she was relieved knowing that she could always ask Bushra about what was going on at any given moment. But before she could arrive at the cafeteria, she bumped into the last person she wanted to see.

Hello there, Ms. Meow.
I have been looking for you!

TE:R
ADVENTURES
CLOE UNDERCOVER
(1/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDD03K

CLOE UNDERCOVER (1/3)

What’s wrong, Cloe?
Surprised to see me?

Cloe was fearful for this very moment since she and Sarpo put this plan into motion. She hoped she wouldn’t be too important in the grand scheme of things so that Maizie wouldn’t pay too much attention to her. But now? She couldn’t do anything but respond back to her “queen”.

Pardon me, my queen.
I was just about to go to the cafeteria.

Hm... I see.
Very well, go on.

Thank you, my queen!

But.
Wait a second.

(worried) Y-yes?

Cloe was getting worried as Maizie slowly walked towards her. No way was Maizie already on her tail... quite literally! Was her acting that bad?!

* Gives her a familiar looking fishing rod *
Can you give this to Bushra when you have the chance?
He forgot it in the throne room.

Oh!
Well, o-of course, my queen!

Thank you.
By the way, I hope you are excited for your knightly duties very soon!
Clara and her team will help you immensely.

...Thanks.

* Waves goodbye *
Farewell, Cloe.
Hope to see you on the line of duty very soon!

Cloe was confused but also relieved after this whole interaction. So, the queen wasn't too suspicious of her... at least for now. She couldn't let loose obviously but at least she didn't have to be worried all the time about her situation. Cloe saw Bushra eating by himself and gave him the fishing rod just before Maizie's announcement.

Oh, thanks Kitty Cat!
Where did you find this?

Oh, the queen gave it to me!

T-the queen?!
* Chuckles *
You are such a lucky bastard, you know that?

* Fake laughs *
I guess you are right, ha ha!

Not many people can directly talk to the queen herself.
I was one of the lucky few that has.
You should be honored by that!

E-yup!
Whatever you just said!

Cloe suddenly heard the sound of a mic getting set up.

What the-

Sssh!
Keep quiet!
It's the queen!

(Oh boy...)

Greetings everyone!
Your queen is here!

Everybody outside started clapping and cheering for their queen while the knights in the cafeteria were also happy to hear from their queen. She was making the announcement from the balcony connected to her throne room. It was a special occasion whenever she showed her face to the crowd below.

The mass crystallization plan has been a total success!
We have invaded many... MANY towns in these past few days and soon, we will live happily ever after!

Everyone continued cheering on but stopped once they heard Maizie raise her hand. She had something important to clarify.

But... there are still people out there who don’t accept my gift to the world, and because of that, we need to find them before they start making trouble.
I will be sending a select group of crystal knights to track them down and bring them to justice!

Everyone frowned at the thought of people rejecting their queen’s gift... all except for one.

Thank you for listening, everyone.
Take care.

Everyone waved goodbye at their queen in unison and Cloe was the only one who wasn’t. She started to panic and quickly waved goodbye to the queen too.

(Phew, that was a close one.)

Man, today was so much fun, wasn’t it?

Y-yeah, it was!

Say, what were you doing outside the castle a few hours ago?

Oh, well.
I was playing around with this mother and her three kids.
They looked like they needed some company.

Ooh, so more kitty cats like you?
That’s awesome!

Yeah.

Even though Cloe enjoyed her time with the kids and their mother, she didn’t do any progress on contacting the others. She had to do something about it now that she was free.

Hey, Bushra.

Yeah, what’s up?

That reminded me.
I should probably pay them a visit again.
So, I should go.

Oh, alright.
That works for me.
Take care, Cloe.

You too.

After getting out of the cafeteria, Cloe quickly rushed outside the castle in order to find something like a phone. She wondered if there were any phone booths around these parts. That way, she could stay anonymous and still contact them. But that came with a catch, she could always get suspected by the other crystal knights if she made calls repeatedly. But then she realized... there was no connection to be had. When she and the rest of MPC2 tried contacting others through their phones, it was a total failure. She had to find another way to contact the others. So, she took a breath and started walking around the park. It was a peaceful place where she didn't have to think about... well, anything else really. She saw a crystal knight trying to get a radio to work. She was intrigued by it.

Uhm... hello?

Hi...

Is everything alright?

Not really, no.

I have been trying to get this dumb thing to work again!
But I just don’t want to deal with it anymore.
Stupid cluster of metal!

Uhm... alright?
* Points at the radio *
Can I take it?

Oh sure.
It doesn’t do much good now anyways.
You can use it as an accessory or something.

Thank you!

No problem.
Just don’t tell the pink cat that you got it from me if you see her.

...why not?

Trust me, you wouldn’t want to know.

Alright then.

Cloe slowly walked away from the weirdo. She wondered if she could change the frequency of the radio just enough so that she could communicate with the others. It was worth a shot. She went to the isolated part of the park, next to the pool with geese swimming in the pool. She learned how to use a radio from an old friend of hers. In fact, she didn’t talk with her in a long time. The last time they ever spoke with each other was even before Cloe became the

circus runner of Circus Kurza. She started modifying the frequency with the buttons.

Come on... come on...

Andddddd... that should do it!

Artender showed Emily the newly set up radio. It wasn't much but at least they had something modern in their base again after the whole mess with the Rascals.

Woah, that's so cool!

Want to listen to something?

Okay!

Artender started mashing the buttons on the radio, clearly not knowing what he was doing. There was an irritating buzzing sound coming from the radio as well.

* Raises her hand *
Um...

Hold on a sec, Emily.
I got this.

Surprisingly, he fixed it! At least he thought he did as the buzzing sound was no more.

Okay, at least we got that fixed.

But suddenly, Artender heard mumbling sounds from someone who he never thought he would see again.

H-h-hello?!
Can anyone hear me?!

Cloe?!

Artender?!
Is that you?!

Hi!

W-what?!
Where, why, how-

Calm down, calm down Artender.
Is everybody okay in there?

Y-yes!
G, Emily, Teo, Hood-

Hood?!

Long story short, we need her to fix this mess.
What about you and Sarpo?

I’m pretending to be one of the crystal knights while Sarpo stayed behind to not make them more suspicious.

I see.

Is the kitty alright?

Yes, she is, Emily.
* Coughs *
I’m so glad you guys are alright though!
We were worried sick.
Especially the kids.

He’s talking about me!

Believe me, we were worried about you guys too.
You are our most important asset right now!
I can’t do much here besides tell you guys about their plans and Sarpo... yeah.

I understand but this is great news!
Now we can communicate with each other!

Yeah, that’s why I have been trying to find a way for hours now!

We need to write down these frequency values just in case we forget!

You read my mind!

So, the frequency is-

Hey there!

Cloe, because of her reflexes, immediately changes the frequency just so she wasn’t caught left-handed.

Hello?
Cloe are you there?!

W-what happened?

I don’t know Emily, but I hope she’s safe.

Cloe was shocked. How did this girl get here so fast without making a sound?!

Heyo!

H-hi?

What were you doing over there?

O-oh, you know?
* Randomly moves around the buttons *
Just listening to some tunes while watching the beautiful view!

Ooh, alright!
That’s fun!
I love listening to pop music too!
Marine’s songs are amazing!

That’s cool.

But uhm...
Ms. Meow, was it?

Yes, you are talking to her.

I was looking for you!

For... what?

Your friend Bushra told me you were new around here so me and my best buddy, Terry, would love to give you a tour around the kingdom!

N-no, thanks.
I am occupied with something right now.

Pleaseeeee!

Lydia looked so upset that she almost looked like a sad puppy. Cloe was starting to feel bad because of it.

I love making new friends!
Bushra told us you were a very cool person... cat...?
I’m not sure.

Yeah, yeah, I get it.
* Sighs *
Fine, let’s go.
Your name was...?

Lydia May!
Nice to meet’cha!
* Handshakes with Cloe *

I am sure we are going to be fast friends!

(We will have to see about that.)

Thus, Cloe's mission of communicating with her friends was halted as she was now on a tour with two strangers she didn't know about.

Terry! Terry!
I found her!

Neat.

(So that's Terry.)
(That's the guy who Bushra switched shifts with for a short while.)

She was all by herself, listening to music!

That's cool.

* Lightly hits Terry's chest *
Come on, big guy!
Introduce yourself!

* Sighs *
The name's Terry Guvner and I'm her friend.

Nice.
* Reaches out her paw *
And my name is Cloe Meow.
Nice to meet you.

* Handshakes with her as well *
Nice to meet you too.

(fangirling) EEH!
This is so cool!
We are gonna have so much fun together!

We will see.

Yeah.

* Frowns *
Aww, come on guys!
Be optimistic!
We can go on a lot of places!

Like?

I never thought you would ask!
* Holds her paw *

Come on!

So, the tour has officially begun.

So, this is the community food bank!
The folks who aren’t qualified to be crystal knights get their food here!

Well... won’t it run out someday?

It probably could-

But the queen sends folks on missions all the time, so we’ve never faced a problem like that yet!

Oh yeah, didn’t the queen send a group to hunt down... the remaining MPC2 members?

Oh yeah, she did...
* Looks at her *
I know it must be hard for you.

W-what?!
* Gets worried *
Where did you get that?!

Oh no no, don’t worry.
Bushra told us about it.
Said you were sad about them.

...oh, right.
Well... I certainly am.

We can only hope they are brought here peacefully, and they can join us.
Isn’t that right, Terry?

Yeah, I wouldn’t want their crystallization process to be more difficult than it must be.
It certainly took us by surprise when we were first crystallized.

(Hm... these two seem like good people.)
(Too bad their minds are scrambled because of the crystallization.)

Hey, whatcha thinking about?

O-oh, nothing.
Was just appreciating the community food bank.
...say.
Why are you guys hanging out with me suddenly?
Don’t you have knightly duties to do?

Well, technically no.

We wanted to take a day off from our duties to find our boss!

Who?

Clara Spades.
You might have heard of her.

(Oh... so THAT'S what her name is...)

Cloe remembered the time she saw Clara beating herself up over her failure over something.

(The poor girl...)

We searched all over the place, but we couldn't find her!

I swear she was in one of the training camps...

But since we couldn't find her, we are free for the rest of the day.

That's... interesting.

Yeah...
* Quickly shakes her head *
Anyways though, this isn't the only place we wanted to show you!

Yeah, there are training camps right around the corner.
Some go there to learn about the crystal guns-

While some go there to practice their original fighting skills!

Hm... What exactly do you mean?

Well, I’m good at using an axe myself while Terry’s an awesome archer!
Some might say he’s the BEST archer!

* Chuckles *
Thanks, Lydia.

No problem!

Lydia continues showing Cloe the wonders of the Crystal Kingdom. She showed her a bunch of cool pools, a potion shop and a spa which Cloe rejected right from the get-go. Cloe couldn’t go there because of her not wanting to take off the helmet, which did upset Lydia a little bit. And as the sun started to set, so was the tour coming to an end.

Wow, that was fun!

I gotta admit, Lydia.
You sure know how to entertain people.

Aww... thank you, Terry.
You have been an amazing host alongside me too!

Yeah, today was fun.

Want to hang out tomorrow, as well?

...Sure!
I’m all for that.

Sweet!

Well...
* Looks at the sunset *
I guess the tour is over, so I better go back to the castle-

No, wait!
We have one more place to visit!

...We do?

You know, about the thing the queen mentioned!

Oooh, right.
You are right, my mistake.

All good, big guy.

Alright then.
We gotta make it quick though.

No need to worry about that because it’s in the castle itself!

Oh?

Yup.

Well, what is it?

I wouldn’t want to spoil the surprise!

Lydia rushed towards the castle entrance and waves her hand at the two.

COME ON, GUYS!

* Looks at Terry *
Is she always like this?

Yeah, but don’t let that fool you.
She’s a sweet person.

I can see that, yeah.

Well, we better not keep her waiting.

Good idea!
(I wonder what Maizie has in store for me...)

15 minutes later.

Close your eyes, close your eyes!

* Chuckles *
Okay fine, Lydia.
I will.

You are gonna freak!

Cloe heard a door opening. Terry was helping her not bump onto anything.

And... You can open your eyes now!

Cloe opened her eyes and saw an empty room in front of her.

TA DA!
This is your room now!

My... room?

Yup!
The queen gives every one of her crystal knights a room in her giant castle!
She’s such a nice person!

Yup.

T-thanks guys!
I appreciate it a whole lot!

No problem, Cloe.

Yeah!
We will meet up tomorrow again, right?

* Chuckles *

Right...
Goodnight to you guys!

Goodnight to you too, Cloe!

Take care, Cloe.

Thanks for today!

Cloe waited until the door was closed shut. What a weird day it has been. It started with her wanting to communicate with her Artender and co... only to spend the day with new friends instead. Not that she was complaining too much about that though. Both seemed like nice people. The problem was... she didn't write down the frequency values. She remembered some of it, but the full thing was just a blur in the back of her mind. She was frustrated over it. She had to get the connection to work all over again. She sighed and looked around for a moment. Beating herself over it wasn't going to help her now. She had to act natural. For starters, she was going to set up her own room. She thought this was a cool thing. Not only did she have a place for herself, but she could also spend time here to communicate with Artender and the rest once she remembered the frequency values.

She rested on the bed and looked at the ceiling. I will get you out of there my love, she thought before closing her eyes and finally taking a well-deserved nap.

Meanwhile, in the Enchanted Forest, three crystal knights, riding horses, were on the hunt for the remaining MPC2 members.

Man, this stinks!

Don’t talk about the queen that way!

I’m not talking bad about the queen.
I just don’t think I am cut out for this!

Shut it, you two.
The rouge members could be anywhere!

Yeah, Luke is right!

Hmpf...

Suddenly, the three heard a noise coming from the woods. It sounded like a giant was taking stroll in there.

W-what was that?!

Don’t know but we will have to investigate it.
* Looks at the other two *
Percy, Harper! Split up!
* Picks up a firework from his bag *
Light up a firework if you find them first.

Got it!

Okay...

And so, the three split up. Luke gave the other two torches as well as himself. Trying to find out who was roaming around the woods in the middle of the night was as hard as it sounded.

Come on out, little ones.
The queen will have mercy on you!

Percy suddenly heard something run behind him.

I know you are out there!
* Readies his crystal gun *
S-show yourself!

AS YOU WISH.

Before he could realize what was going on, a red figure suddenly popped out of thin air and sliced his head in one fell swoop.

Luke noticed something was up as the sound of his attack echoed through the forest.

Something fishy is going around here...
Harper, are you there-

Before Luke could finish his sentence, his fate was sealed. His body fell right next to Percy’s. The figure noticed the horses freaking out over his attacks and used his magic to turn them into his mutant minions.

THAT’S MORE LIKE IT...

H-hello?
Percy...? Luke...?

When Harper saw what was in front of her, she almost screamed. A red guy was standing right next to their corpses with the horses looking like deformed monsters. She had to get out of here.

* Whispering to herself *
I will be on my way back home now...
(Don’t try to think about what you just saw; don’t try to think about what you just SAW!)
(The queen must know about this-)

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING-

Harper screamed and shot the figure with her crystal gun. She was holding her chest because of what she had just experienced. Thinking she tamed the beast; she takes a deep breath. But the figure started growing brighter and brighter until the crystals on his body cracked wide open.

WHAT?!

Harper was in disbelief. The crystallization process was suppose to be permenant but this monster had broken free from it. She had to get away quick! She told the horse to speed up and only looked back to shoot crystal lasers at random places. She didn’t even know where the figure was.

Suddenly, the figure appeared in front of the horse and zapped both of them to the ground. She looked at the horse with fear in its eyes as

it was transformed into a beast much like it's brotheren. She tried moving her limbs but it was too difficult. Especially with a demon staring at her...

P-please… don't hurt me...

AS A MATTER OF FACT...
* Commands his minions to stand down *
I won't!

R-really?!

YES…
INSTEAD, YOU ARE GOING TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME!

Like what?

YOU ARE GOING TO TELL YOUR QUEEN TO SURRENDER AND TELL HER TO GIVEAWAY HER MAGIC AND ARMY.

* Trying to catch her breath *
B-but-

OR IF SHE WANTS TO FACE OFF AGAINST ME...
* Maniacally laughs *

I WON’T OBLIGE.

W-what if I don’t want to?

WELL, IN THAT CASE...
* Looks at the beasts *
I ASSUME YOU WOULDN’T WANT TO BE FUSED WITH A HORSE?

EEK!

Harper quickly got up and ran away from the scene. She couldn’t risk staying there any longer. She had to let her people... her queen know.

RUN... RUN FOR ME, WEAKLING!
SOON, THE CRYSTAL KINGDOM WILL FACE THE MASTER OF MAGICKS, **XTRESS THE SORCERER!**

TE:R
ADVENTURES
X
CLOE UNDERCOVER
(2/3)
VIDD03K
SOHEKUN

CLOE UNDERCOVER (2/3)

It's a big day for the Crystal Kingdom today. The Queen had plans, ambitious plans, for what to do next. Given how she was only missing Xtress' powers to complete her objective, she was ecstatic. Meanwhile, a group of Crystal Knights were training together, in a small, empty camp. It was Cloe, Lydia and Terry. They were starting to warm up to each other, they enjoyed each other's company, and things seemed to go well.

Phew… You're giving me quite the workout, huh?.

Tee-hee!
I can't wait to show off to boss!

I'll be, you're much better than I thought, Miss.

Ah, haha, thanks guys…

Her "fellow" Knights have been treated very well by the Queen lately, Cloe thought. She's been awfully kind to them, a stark contrast to how she was back at the "Pizza Party", if you want to call it that. Obviously, she'd be inclined to treat her subordinates well, but since Cloe wasn't brainwashed, it was a really jarring difference. Now that she was a little closer to these "kids", she could ask them about the full extent of Maizie's schemes.

Say, I don't really understand Queen Maizie's plans, care to explain them to me a little?

Okay, sit down, beca-

I got it!
It's not that complicated, really!

Cloe noticed Terry looking at Lydia with a deadly stare.

I'm sorry, did the middle of my sentence interrupt the start of yours?

Shut up, wardrobe!
Clearly, she asked me!

Nervously giggles
It's fine, it's fine, I'll listen to both of you…

Okay!
* sits down *
So basically, the Queen wants the big bad sorcerer's power, right?

Right.

So, she sent a bunch of Knights after him and the Resistance!
She only needs the red sorcerer’s powers, since she already has the others’ powers!

Fascinating.
So, she DOES have those two’s powers in some capacity.
(This is going to make it trickier to get those two’s powers.)
(They will need it once we are all ready.)

Uh… Cloe?
Perdiah to Cloe, hello?

O-oh, sorry. I was just thinking of something, Lydia.
Do go on.

Okay!
As I was saying-

B-but!
Can I ask something first?

O-oh, sure!
* nervously puts her hand on the back of her head *
I can wait!

You said the Queen had Team Bushra’s powers, right?

Yup.

So why hasn't she used them yet?

Right, I forgot to tell you something.

Lydia looks around herself in hurry. It looked like she wanted to tell Cloe a secret. Cloe couldn’t help but feel excited. What could she be hiding-

See, it’s kind of a rumor.

...what?

Yeah! There are a few crystal knights who saw her use those powers but no one can confirm or deny the claims.

We believe she managed to converge these powers into her staff.

Hence why she doesn’t use them as often...

Exactly!

Huh, that's bad…
Mumbling
Then again, that's not the worst thing she did yet…

Ms. Meow?
Something wrong?

O-oh!
* chuckles nervously *
Ahah, no no! Nothing!

Are you sure?
Seems like something has been in your mind since you got here.

Oh, it’s nothing.
Don’t worry about it.

You sure?

Yeah.

Awww… come on, Terry.
Don’t judge her too much!
My mind also goes to random places from time to time!

I thought that was because you were stupid.

Hey!

Cloe tried playing along but she couldn’t help but think about the

radio she found a few days ago. She had to fix it somehow and warn her friends of Maizie’s plans.

Anyways though, where's Bushra?

Oh, that guy?
I heard he's on a super secret mission.

Super secret, eh?

Yeah. It’s disclosed for everyone who’s not the queen.

I see...

* raises his eyebrows *
Why are you so interested in this stuff anyways?

Terrryyyy!

What? I wasn’t being judgemental this time!
I was just asking a normal question.

It’s alright, Lydia.
* looks at Terry *

I am just a Traveler gal who is interested in the finer details!
That’s all!

Hm... that makes sense.
I’m a big fan of details too.

* trying to count her fingers *
Can I also join the club?

…maybe.

Good enough.

Cloe yawns as the trio get ready to leave for bed.

Well, it’s getting late so... goodnight, guys!

Goodnight, Ms. Meow.
See you tomorrow!

Good luck on your guardly duties!

Thanks, you two.

Cloe waved the two goodbye as she left the canteen area. So Bushra’s whereabouts were disclosed, Cloe thought to herself. It’s disclosed for everyone who’s not the queen, Terry said. Cloe

smiled.

“We will see about that.”

Later that day, Cloe takes the shift as Sarpo's guard for the night. She's relieved to see him, the love of his life, still a bit somber about leaving him like this, however; it felt like that day, many years ago, but thankfully it was a much less extreme situation.

Cloe knocked on the prisoner’s door and then entered there with a big smile on her face, happy to see the love of her life again.

Hey, Hon.

Oh, Cloe!
You got the shift tonight?

Yup, pretty lucky, huh?

Sure is, I’m so glad you are safe.

Me too. There’s been a few… close calls in the past few days but I managed to sneak my way out of it.

That’s great to hear.
That’s the Cloe I love!

* blushes *
Thanks, sweetie... It hurts knowing you are stuck here while I’m free from these shackles...

* holds his hand *
I promise this will be over soon.

Please, don’t try to rush things.
Maizie is definitely playing the long game with… whatever she is planning.
The more intel you get, the better.

Yeah... that much is true.
Speaking of those said intels, there's something I REALLY need to tell you about.

Oh, really?
What is it?

I found a radio down in the kingdom and managed to contact our friends.
I have been feeding them intel ever since.

Oh, that’s great!
That will help our friends change the tides of this battle!
* notices something *
But you don’t sound too happy about it, did something go wrong?

Yes… I lost the frequency values so I can’t contact them anymore!

Ah… that’s a problem.

Sure is.

* starts walking in circles *
No matter what I do, I can't remember it.
It feels like I'm going insane.

Cloe, sweetie?

Cloe looks at Sarpo with her fists clenched.

Take deep breaths.
I believe in you.
You got this.

With Sarpo's advice, Cloe takes a deep breath and thinks happy thoughts. She then looks at the open window in front of them.

Sorry for losing my cool like that, Sarpo.

It's okay, Cloe.
I know you will remember those frequencies… eventually.

That's… reassuring?
* shakes her head *
I mean what you said really isn't but the fact that you said it…

Aww, stop it!
You are gonna make me blush too!

Cloe and Sarpo both look at each in happiness. Even if they were forced to be apart, they always had each other deep down.

Well… what about you, sweetie?

Anything interesting happened?

Oh, me?
Well, like I said, Maizie's been doing some calculations on me for a while now and who knows what she's planning.

I see.

I have also been thinking of a plan!

Oh? What is it?

So, I have been thinking… since you can go outside, you can bring me some spare robotic part upgrades from inside the kingdom.

Ooh… What are you going to use those for?

Once I have everything I need; I can fight off Maizie and get rid of her for good!

Sarpo... isn't that a bit… risky?

I know that.
But I can't just stand idly while you and our friends are spending their days surviving in this apocalypse!
* sighs *
So, can you do that for me, please?

Hm...
Nods
Yeah, I can do that, I got it.

Thanks, sweetie.
Before you go, I need to tell you about another thing.

Oh?

I heard from Maizie and the other guards that there are cameras in front of this very room.
I’m not sure how we can deal with those.
The plan is perfect… EXCEPT for this!

Hon, are you really worried?
Don't be silly, I can just shut off the cameras!

You can… do that? How?

*Smirks *
It's a little secret, don't worry about it!

Blushes
Oh, you… Heh, you really look like a kitty right now.

Blushing too
H-hey, what're you talking about!?

Now's not the time for that!

The lovers took their time to enjoy what little time they had together, they knew it would be short lived.

Meanwhile, inside the throne room; a crystal knight walks in, bearing horrible news. As it turned out, she was the only one to come out of the mission alive, Xtress had wiped out her entire squadron.

I-I’m telling you, my queen.
He was bloodthirsty!

Woah, woah, simmer down, soldier!

I-I’m sorry, I’m just...

Scared, I know.
You are safe here now.

Thank you...
* looks at Maizie again *
He-he told me that...
* gulps *
He said he wanted you, my queen, to give away your powers to him... or he would challenge you to a fight!

Giggling
Uh huh… is that it?

* still shaking from the experience *
Y-yes?

My, what an unexpected turn of events…
Heh, I see, you may leave now.

O-of course, my queen.

Maizie watched as Harper left the room as she started laughing to herself.

Yes! This is perfect, hahaha!
I couldn't ask for better!
If it’s a fight he wants, it’s a fight he’s going to get!

But M-my Queen… Why on Perdiah are you so ecstatic about this?
We're losing a lot of manpower for this, and-

Hah! Don't be ridicilous, Clara!
He was going to show his ugly red mug eventually!
Why try hunting him down when he’s coming straight for us?!
* claps her hands together in excitement *
When that evil dirtbag with a hat pulls up, it's curtains for him, haha!

Yes, but…

You worried about my hoodster possession thing?

Y-yes! You told me all about your past once and I wouldn’t want that monster to land a hand on you!

I’m glad you think so much about me but really, you worry too much Clara.

Maizie points at the necklace she was wearing.

See this necklace? I'll be fine with this!
This very ruby right here can negate his ability to take over me!

Sighs
That's good news… Just be careful, alright?

Yes, yes, I will, don't you worry, you sad little dog.

Maizie comforted Clara. She was enjoying way more than she should have.

You can leave now.
I need to prepare for the battle ahead.

Oh, I see...

Clara was a bit upset her time with Maizie was coming to a close this soon but alas, she had to do what her Queen asked of her. She was about to leave the room until...

Actually, wait up!

Don’t go just yet!

Oh? What is it, my queen?

There's something I need to ask of you.

Clara’s eyes shined brighter than before. It was an honor to work for her beloved.

Oh yes!
What is it, my queen?

Go look after our people in here instead of joining us in the battlefield.

B-but-

* giggles *
Surely, you can't fail to do that, can you sweetie?

I… But, my Queen, going all by yourself is too dangerous, I suggest that-

Clara, listen, I get it, you're worried about me, and that's nice, I really appreciate your concern.
However, you HAVE to do as I say, I know what I'm doing, okay?

… I understand.

There we go, much better!
* smiles *
Off you go!

Clara, with a heavy heart, finally gets ready to leave. Guilt was all she could feel, failure after failure. She was an utter disaster in her own eyes, she couldn't bring any results to her beloved… Beloved Queen. The mere thought of disappointing Maizie again was gut wrenching for her. On her way to the balcony, she encountered the two people who have been looking for her all this time.

Oh, hi boss!
It's been a while!

Boss! How's it going?

Worried
… Boss? Are you there?

… Oh, hey guys, I don't have much time, you have to go.

W-what do you mean?

The Queen issued a new mission for you, you're gonna fight against Xtress.

Please ready your stuff.

…oh.

Okay then…

Are you also coming?

...no. The Queen told me to look after these people so... I guess that’s that.
* waves the two goodbye *
So yeah, see you two later.

The two watched in silence as Clara left the corridor just as quickly.

Aww…

Sighs
Don't worry, Lydia.
Once this is all over, we'll be back at what used to be, I assure you that.

I sure hope so… I really miss hanging around with boss…

She couldn't face them. No, not like this, not after all of the failures and disappointments she caused. She has already failed her Queen numerous times before, she couldn’t bear the thought of failing them too, the thought of their respect for her vanishing. With a heavy heart, she moved on, getting ready to hopefully set the record

straight. Just this once…

Meanwhile, Cloe was just entering the canteen while everyone was packing up their stuff. She spotted Terry and Lydia also preparing.

Oh, hey guys… what's going on?

We are going on a dangerous mission!
The queen is forming a special formation group for this.

Oh sweet!
(That's fantastic, with them gone from the kingdom, I can investigate this place even further-)

Oh yeah, I think you are also coming with us.

WHAT?!

Yeah…
* gives Cloe a list *
Your name was on the list so I thought you already knew.

This is… an unexpected turn of events.

Yeah but hey.
* shrugs *
What can you do, right?

I suppose you are correct…

A few hours later, of the three packing their stuff, they were worried and also excited for the mission ahead.

Come on guys; we need to get going soon!

Right, right, just give me a minute.

Yeah… Yeah! I'm ready!
* almost trips over her backpack *
D-don't worry about it, Ms. Meow!

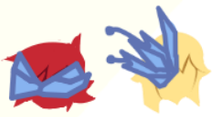
giggles
Alright, alright, if you say so.

Lydia, you actual numbskull idiot, can you stop forgetting your axe!
It's made out of silver, for goodness sake!

Oh! Tee-hee, whoopies!
You're also forgetting stuff though!
Where is your bag with the crystalizer gun?

S-shut up, twerp!
I was gonna get it just now!

Stop bickering, you two!
* chuckles *
If you keep at it, I'll make you forget your own names!



Ma'am yes ma'am!

* whispers at Terry *
Golly, she's almost as scary as boss…!

I dunno, Lydia, I think she actually means business…

The newly formed Trio is now ready to go! Some more time for preparation would have been nice, but they would make do with what they have. Cloe remembered a little bit about the battle against the sorcerer that took place so much time ago, it was a grueling battle, many lost their lives there, she was terrified at the idea of having to face a tragedy like that again, especially after getting so close to the goofy duo of Lydia, a flower obsessed bundle of energy, and Terry, the sassy and intelligent one of the team. Fear was a great motivator so she was determined to protect these two at all costs.

Meanwhile, Clara watched as the Queen and her friends departed from the castle. Her head was feeling heavy, all of these depressing thoughts were starting to get to her. She puffed her cheeks and hit them with her hands, like a little kid would. She knew she had to focus on the task given to her, so for the time being, she let go of those thoughts. Well, she let go most of them, besides her unconditional love for Maizie, a feeling that kept her motivated, for better or worse.

TE:R
ADVENTURES
STAILS32
CLOE UNDERCOVER
(3/3)
VIDDO3K
SUPERTAILS32

CLOE UNDERCOVER (3/3)

It was a monumental day for Perdiah. So much was happening all at once, but most importantly, Maizie and a select few Knights were about to begin their offense against the red Sorcerer Xtress. The army was waiting for Maizie's next command.

Cloe's team was under immense stress, especially Cloe herself—she's had the displeasure of fighting him once already, and now all of the memories from that fight started flowing back into her head.

Ms. Meow? Hello?
* waves at her*
You still with us?

You, big, dumb sack of junk, give her a moment, will ya!?

But I'm worried for her-

Terry bonks Lydia's head.

OW!
* holds her head *
HEY!

Stop yelling!

Oh!

* shakes her head *
Ah, uh, h-hey, don't worry, you guys!

You are awake?!

Y- yeah.
It's just, y'know, I'm a little nervous, that’s all!

See? You're such a handful, Terry, you worry too much.

The boy, still unconvinced, decides to go along with them since there was no point in arguing, knowing that this could potentially be their last moments together… He shakes off these thoughts and goes back to thinking about what kind of monster they're going up against, trying to figure out a viable strategy.

While the trio were scared for their lives, their Queen was waiting on everyone to line up. This battle was going to be tense but it was going to be worth it in the end.

People of the Crystal Kingdom!
Are we ready to take down the wizard who is threatening our lives?!

“OF COURSE!”

Maizie chuckled. Her team of misfists were at least determined. They were all willing to die for their cause.

Very well then!
* points at the walls *
Once I give command to open these walls, you will all do as I say until I command you to attack!
Understood?!

“YES! ALL FOR THE CRYSTAL QUEEN!”

Maizie was quite satisfied of their reactions. She was in love with their enthusiasm!

*giggles *
This'll be a milestone for our Kingdom, mhm!
* raises her hand *
Once we get rid of that vicious villain... get excited, because we will be rewriting history!

Yayy…

… Ahem, I said, be ready, because we're about to change history!

Maizie pointed her staff at them. The trio jolt out of fear, then pretend to act excited.

O-oh, of course!

Pardon our reactions, our queen.
We were just distracted.

Yeah totally!

Now that’s what I like to hear!

Maizie points her staff at the crystal knights in charge of the walls.

OPEN THE WALLS!

As Maizie yelled at those crystal knights, the walls started opening slowly but surely. And so, the group was headed to defeat the strongest foe they have faced yet! Maizie leading the team of misfits forward while the trio and the others followed from behind. She knew exactly what would go down: they defeat the Sorcerer, take his powers, and the takeover can finally pick up its pace! It was that simple!

Meanwhile, the trio were having a small talk.

(nervous) Guys… We'll beat that guy, right?
Ms. Meow, you did it before, right?
You can do it again, right?

W-well, I didn't beat him per say... I just happened to be there.

Oh dear.

Sigh… Don't worry, you two.
Worst case scenario, the Queen could use her “super secret” powers with her staff, right?
Besides-
* taps his forehead*
-we got this!

Hehe, yeah, you're right!
Bonks Terry's forehead
It better work right, you big bum!

And you'd better keep your grip tight on your axe, you don't wanna play target practice, do ya?

Heyy!!! Don't be mean!!!

Cloe watches the two continued acting like children once again. She chuckles, she was going to miss these two once she would eventually have to leave them behind. On that note... man, did it feel weird spending time with these two for the better half of a month at this point. They were crystal knights, sure but they had such a nice bond... even in this state. She hoped she could befriend these two once everything was done with.

After a few minutes of walking, everyone suddenly stopped in their tracks which made Lydia fall on Terry's back.

Oof!

Be careful, you twat!

S-sorry!

Cloe was trying to look ahead of them to see why they stopped but she couldn't see anything from all the people blocking her view.

This is it!
I can sense that wizard's aura!

Everyone in the army looked at her confused.

For uhh... reasons!
* coughs *
Anyways, ready your weapons!
We are not going back until we take that monster down!

And so, everyone pulled out their weapons for the fight. Some only had crystallizers on their hands while some brought unusual weapons like Lydia bringing her powerful looking axe and Terry bringing his trustworthy bow. Speaking of them however...

Hey, Ms. Meow!

O-oh! Hello Lydia!

We just wanted to say good luck!

Yeah, it’s going to be a tough one out there!

Yeah!

T-thanks you two.
I appreciate that.

Cloe looked as the two showed her their trustworthy weapons. Cloe couldn’t help but smile. It relieved her, it made her feel a bit more confident in their ability to defeat Xtress.

The vibe of this fight was much different compared to her first fight against Xtress: her friends were tense, scared, some even unwilling,

but now, even if their numbers were significantly smaller, they were playing with one another, smiling brightly; it was this brightness she needed to move forward.

When they were all ready, Maizie ordered everyone to follow her again. It looked like they weren't going to attack... for now. As they walked a few more meters, they noticed Xtress silently waiting for them to arrive. He was lying his back on a tree with a huge army consisting of beasts. Cloe had never seen anything like these before.

What ARE these things...

But then, she remembered. G told Cloe about a mutant beast they had to fight in Mount Neverends before this whole Maizie fiasco started. Perhaps these things were just more of those mutant beasts... As it turns out, Xtress also noticed them arriving as he started chuckling at them. Everyone in the group could hear his sinister laugh.

YOU ARE LATE, LITTLE GIRL!

Xtress looks back at the tree he was lying on and chops it in half. There was a faint screeching coming from inside the army. Cloe could tell that was Lydia.

AND I THOUGHT YOU WERE A QUEEN!

As if! I had to put together an army first, for Pete's sake!
* points her staff at him *
As the Crystal Queen, I command you to stand down and give me your powers!

MWAHAHA!

THIS DAMNED GIRL, HAVE YOU A DEATH WISH, PERHAPS!?

Hah! You should start thinking about one for yourself!

I DIDN’T COME HERE TO SURRENDER!

Xtress opened both of his hands and showed Maizie the fire burning within. Maizie knew he was trying to scare her but that wasn’t going to work on her!

AND AS YOU CAN SEE...
* points at his own army *
I ALREADY HAVE THE PERFECT COUNTER FOR YOUR WEAK COMPANIONS!

* chuckles *
As you wish!
BRING IT ON!

And so, the battle had officially began.

As the two leaders were fighting with each other, the trio realizes they can't be of help in the big battle, because Xtress was surrounded by his own army, causing no one else to interfere with their fight.

Cloe noticed Lydia fighting against one of the mutants with the help of Terry. She was going to help them out but then noticed them taking care of it just fine.

An axe to the face gotta do it!
* squints her eyes *

Oh, hey! I remember this thing!
We fought one of these!

(nervous) Yeah we did, but it was a trash can!

You guys quit fighting each other before I personally turn you into mutants!

Before anyone could say or do anything, a powerful shock wave released from where Maizie was fighting. She narrowly dodges an attack from Xtress, that shook the ground. She counters by trying to stab him with a sword she borrowed from her “beloved” subordinate, managing to scratch the sorcerer a little; he was impressed and worst of all, frustrated.

CURSE YOU, MORTAL!
SUCH POWER IS MINE TO OBTAIN!
YOU'D BEST GIVE IT TO ME!

* looks away *
Tch, okay.

Maizie didn’t care less about his words, so she lunged back at him, trying to stab at him again. Thank goodness, I picked the perfect weapon for this, she thought. She kept attacking Xtress, uninterrupted. Her attacks were fast and also calculated.

What's the problem, big shot?
I thought you were supposed to be some sort of almighty God!

IS THAT SO?
* his eyes start glowing much more *

He claps his hands together, causing crimson crystal-esque pillars to shoot out the ground. She managed to avoid most of them, but inevitably got hurt by a few of them; that was Xtress' first hit. He was ecstatic for sure, so he tried to capitalize on these few moments to continue his offense, but Maizie was quick to recover and blocked his blows with her sword.
Unfortunately for her, however, he was gaining momentum, the tide of the battle was starting to skew in his favor. Maizie couldn't let him get too big of an advantage, so she sneaked under his flurry of attacks and stabbed him once more—she wanted to avoid using her staff unless strictly necessary.

On the other side of the field, Cloe's team was handling themselves very well, the monsters were relatively weak compared to the trio.

Whew, I sure hope the Queen's doing alright! Hey Terry, you got good eyesight, right?

Terry looks towards the main battle, then looks back at Lydia.

Uh… It's going, I guess.

Lydia pulls out her axe from a monster's head.

What do you MEAN "I guess"!?

It could be going better, that's for sure.

Huh, I was expecting these things to be a lot more challenging.

* shooting with his bow *
Don't get too confident, one slip up and we're cooked!

Gee, thanks for the moral support, gamer guy!

Shut up, you're, like, blonde!

Before Lydia and Terry started to argue again, they noticed a crystal knight running towards them with a deadly wound on his chest. He was clearly coming to seek help.

HELP! PLEASE!

We are here to help!
* waves his hand *
Get over here!

The knight smiled in relief after realizing he was about to make it... but unfortunately for him, a beast slammed him against the ground before he could reach the trio, killing him on the spot. The trio all looked at each other in panic.

M-maybe they weren’t as weak as I thought...

Nevermind that!
* picks up another arrow to shoot *
Just stay put and get rid of these guys!

Ay ay, you nerd!

As the trio continued to stand their ground alongside their teammates, the main battle carried on. Maizie's plan was starting to fall apart: with every attack she landed, Xtrees was seemingly getting stronger and stronger, and she was struggling to keep up with his attacks.

Out of options, she decided to finally whip out her staff. Xtress was furious.

PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS, EH?!

* breathing heavily*
You could say that!

FOOLISH GIRL!
YOU'RE NOT FIT FOR MY POWERS!
YOU'VE NO CHANCE AGAINST ME!

Tch, don't underestimate me!
I can handle them just fine!

And so, the battle continued. The two leaders were toe to toe with their fighting skils. Xtress fired more spells as Maizie tried her hardest to counter them all with her crystal magic. Maizie felt something in her chest itching for a single moment but decided to ignore it for the time being. She couldn’t let it distract her.

In the mist of the battle, Xtress was thinking of ways to put Maizie off her game. He didn't know that Maizie herself wasn’t the host of the powers, it was the staff all along. But it wasn't a problem for him. And better yet, that revelation helped him come to a very

helpful conclusion… Yes, of course, this woman was a Hoodster! There was no other way she would even know about his powers to begin with, let alone use them at all. She was just like Hood! It was like a blessing from above, he couldn't waste this opportunity: right before Maizie could make a hammer appear, he began the process to take over her body with his mind controlling ability, but…

WHAT!? IMPOSSIBLE!

HAH!
* chuckles *
You are wondering why you can't possess lil' ol' me?

YOU ARROGANT... THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE POSSESSED!

Hmph, like I told you, do not underestimate—!

Suddenly, she gasped again, out of breath. She held her heart in agony. Something was deeply wrong with her. First time this happened was when she pushed too much with using her powers... Could that be it? She didn't know. She was undeterred, however. So she charged at the sorcerer with a Hammer powered by G's powers in her hand. Xtress was impressed yet angered by her skill and persistence, but it still wasn't enough, the Sorcerer kept finding holes in her plans and continued to beat her.

Something really wasn't right. She's been perfectly healthy this entire time, what was causing this? It's not that Xtress was getting stronger, the problem was Maizie herself getting weaker, and with her health is rapidly deteriorating, she couldn't fight back for any longer. She dropped to her knees in front of Xtress. Angered and confused, she thinks back at every decision she's made, to try and figure out any mistakes, but her mind was cluttered; she had taken a beating, and she was too stressed by the situation to think clearly.

Maizie threw a wave of water from a nearby river by using Bushra's powers but it wasn't enough. Xtress was a tank who couldn't be moved.

HOW PATHETIC.
THE GREAT CRYSTAL QUEEN FALLS IN THE HANDS OF THE GREATEST SORCERER ON THE PLANET, XTRESS!
* notices the necklace she was wearing *
SO THAT'S HOW YOU AVOIDED MY MIND CONTROL!

Xtress smiled. He was having so much fun with this.

DON'T WORRY...
* starts to take off her necklace *
YOU WILL SERVE AS A GREAT VESSEL!
SUCH POWER... I CAN HARDLY CONTAIN MY EXCITEMENT!

But before he could fully take off her necklace, a few arrows hit Xtress on the shoulders.

RAGH!
* looks around *
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?!

Leave our queen alone, you overgrown turnip!

HOW DARE YOU?!

And so, the trio were started pushing Xtress away from their queen.

YOU ARE WEAK!
* creates a shield with his right arm *
YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM TAKING WHAT'S MINE!

Before Xtress could realize it, he got hit by an axe on the foot.

RAGHHH!

...oops.
Sorry if I hurt you too much!

YOU INGRATES!

Taking advantage of this, Cloe's team ran towards the Queen, laying on the ground, trying to keep her breath steady.

Ms. Queen!
Are you alright?!

What on Perdiah… what happened?

* coughs *
You three… Urk-! … Help me get… back to the Kingdom…

W-we will!

While they were busy taking care of Maizie, Xtress started blasting

the group with his fire spell, they all closed their eyes in worry, thinking this was the end for them...

FOR THE QUEEN!

But shocking everyone, they saw one of their other crystal knight friends sacrificing themselves for the cause.

O-oh dear.

We have to get out of here, NOW!

Terry picked up Maizie and started carrying her on his shoulders. Lydia wanted to try and take the staff, to a resounding “no”, she poutted and let Cloe pick it up instead.

HURRY! THIS WAY!

I’m going as fast as I can!

Terry dodged another spell coming from their behind. It was only a matter of time until Xtress caught up with them.

C-Cloe, do something!

Do what?!

I don’t know?!

* points at the staff *
Maybe a cast spell with that staff?!

Cloe didn’t know how to cast a spell, let alone use this staff. But she tried her best. She stopped running and thought of a cool sounding move and pointed the staff at the frustrated Xtress. And so, Cloe casted her first magical spell towards Xtress as a pillar of crystals appeared from the ground and pushed him a bit away. Cloe couldn’t believe what just happened. Did she... actually use crystal magic? But Cloe felt a strange feeling in her chest, she didn’t understand what caused it.

RGAHHH!
* holding his face *
YOU WILL PAY FOR THAT!

EEK!

Woah, that was great, Ms. Meow!
You should totally-

NOT THE TIME, LYDIA!

As the three approached the kingdom’s walls, they all screamed for the knights who were in charge of the walls to open them up.

NO! NO NO NO NO!

As the doors opened, the trio, alongside their queen, jumped inside for safety. Xtress rushed in to enter the kingdom before the walls shut down and unfortunately for him, he was too slow.

Xtress was beyond frustrated. In a rage of fury, he tried to destroy

the Kingdom's walls with all of his powers, unleashing an attack so powerful the ground below him cracked… And it only scratched said walls. It was big, sure, but not even close enough to destroy it.

RAGHHHHH!!!!

Xtress' shouting in anger could be heard from all over the planet. They were able to get away for now but this was far from over!

I DO NOT HAVE THE ENERGY TO TEAR DOWN THIS WALL! I REQUIRE MORE POWER!

Xtress looked at the kingdom's walls with vengeance.

I'VE NO INTEREST PLAYING WITH YOU ANYMORE, BUT WE SHALL MEET AGAIN, CURSED GIRL.
YOU WILL BE MY VESSEL!

Back inside the castle, Maizie was taken by the medics to get examined. The trio were also checked by the medics but they didn't seem to have any major wounds from the fight. After this exhausting day, the trio hugged and waved each other goodbye for the day. But before Cloe entered her room, she decided to go visit Sarpo's cell; she was happy to be back in one piece, but her loved one was more important right now. Cloe managed to get her hands on an upgrade for Sarpo on her way there, so she goes to deliver it to him.

Oh, honey, guess what?

Chicken butt!

… N-no, upgrades.

Oh. Ahem.
* blushes *
Thanks hon, but are you okay?

Huh?
Yeah, why?

No reason, I was just, y'know, worried about MY Queen!

Aw, you flirt!
* giggles *
Come on, put these on, they'll make your booster things work for the first time in forever.

Ah, right.
Before I do anything though... can you come a little closer?

Hm? What is it?

It’s a surprise!

As she got closer to Sarpo, he planted a kiss on her face.

* blushes *
O-oh, you!

Haha! I'm sorry, I couldn't help it!
* smiles *
I was just too worried for you when you said you were going to a battle today.
I am so happy you made it here safe and sound.

You are so sweet, dearie...

He patted her head, which made her cover her face from the embarrassment. She was so happy to be with the love of her life. Suddenly however, she remembered something very crucial. Something she tried to remember for days now!

Oh my gosh, I got it now!

Huh? What are you talking about, sweetie?

I just remembered something very important, Sarpo!
* looks at the door *
I need to go immedietly!

B-but-

She blew a kiss at him and ran off outside. He was bit saddened by this, but if things went his way, they'd be at home cuddling, so he was fine with just waving behind her. Be careful out there, he thought.

Cloe made her way to her room and dusted off the radio she had. She finally remembered the perfect frequency, the one that would allow her to talk to her friends at MPC2! She readied up, turned the frequency to the right value, and then… she heard a lot of buzzing. But soon after, everything fell into place.

Hello? Who's this?

Artender!
It's me, Cloe!

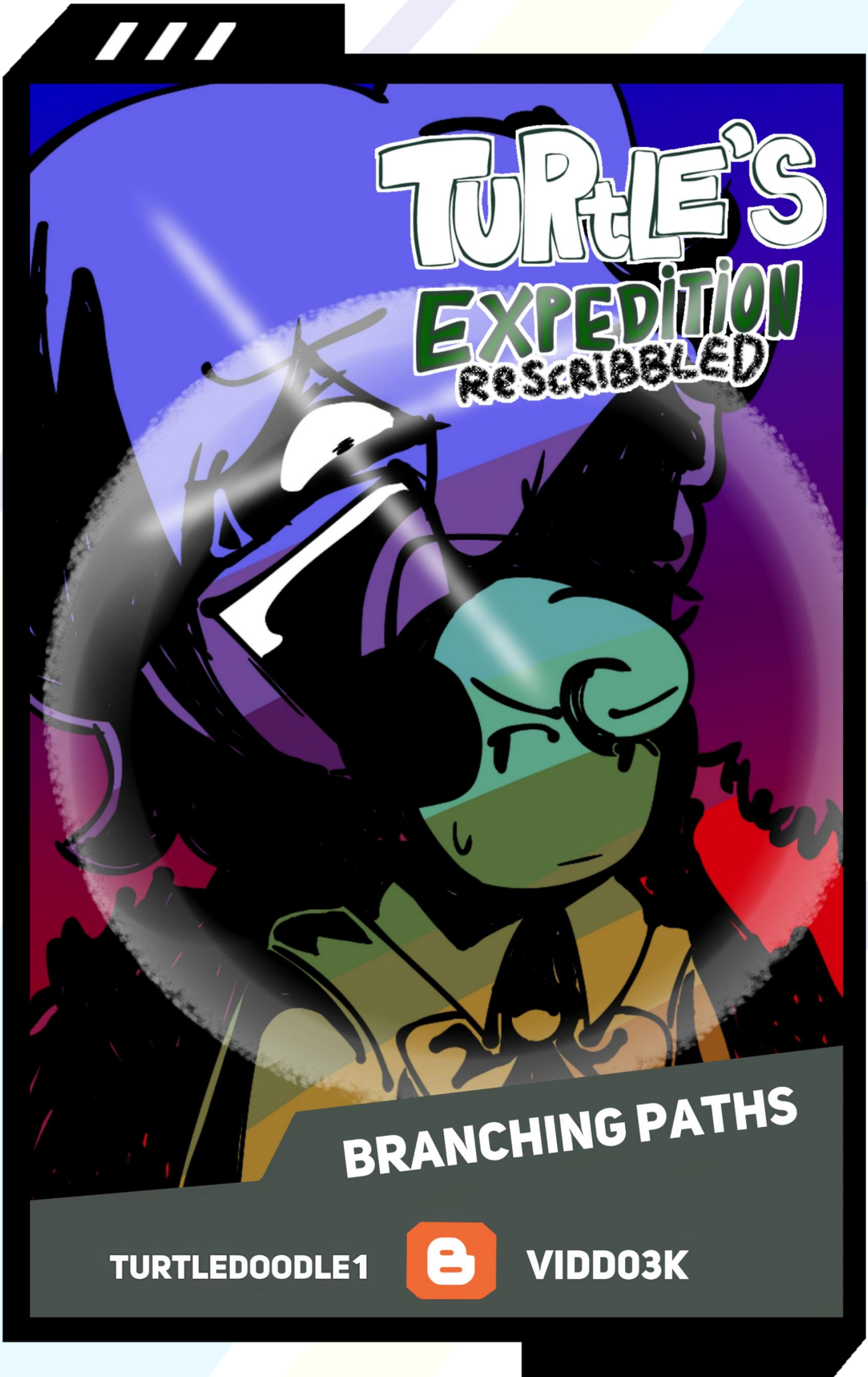
Cloe?! Thank goodness, you are safe!
We thought something bad happened to you!

Don’t worry, Artender. I’m all fine!
* coughs *
I just got a bit rattled up out there, that’s all!

What do you mean by that?!

Oh boy...

“I've got a crazy story to tell!


TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
BRANCHING PATHS
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDD03K

CHAPTER 29: BRANCHING PATHS

It had been a whole week since the Vengeful Rubies' base was thrashed by the Rascals. Ever since then, a lot of things have happened.

After the heroes were done repairing their base of operations, they decided to go on scouting missions more often. And to their surprise, they managed to find survivors, all by themselves, out in the wild. The heroes took them in and gave them rooms to stay in for the time being. As days went by however, they found more and more people, eventually running out of space. But thanks to the increase in man power, they were able to build rooms for the newcomers by expanding their base even more. Shortly after, they went back to "rescue" the captured Crystal Knights and put them to the designated prison cells inside the base itself. It was... much easier said than done. Artender was in charge of managing all of this while Hood was "trying" to teach others how to fight in combat. Emphasis on "trying". Because of her sketchy past, almost no one trusted her. It was only when Artender told them to work with Hood that the people finally gave in and started training with her.

But even with all of that, Hood's situation PALED in comparison to what G was going through. He was relagated to just taking care of the Tender kids and nothing more. He couldnt even help with the construction all that much. While G didn’t hate spending time with the kids, deep down he wanted to do so much more for his friends. Ever since his absymal performance on their fight against the Rascals, he has been feeling worse and worse with each passing day. Back then, he was the star of the show. But now? He was just a babysitter. Something needed to change.

That night, G was looking at the ceiling and thinking to himself "I wonder… what will happen once this is all over?” It was hard to say. G reminisced the times he spent with his friends. The day he first fought Bushra, the time they beat Xtress and most importantly; his journey with Array to find temples... And suddenly, it all clicked. That's right! G could wish for his powers to return if he made it to one of those temples! Of course!

But there was a catch. He remembered Array telling him that the temple would only accept "materalistic" wishes so he wasn’t sure if his wish qualified as such. But regardless, that was a risk he was

willing to take. First thing to do in the morning was telling Artender all about his plans. G could only hope he would accept it.

The very next day;

Come on, little one...

When G arrived at the main center, he saw Artender looking inside a backpack and talking to it. Guess talking to backpacks is a family tradition, G jokingly thought to himself. He wanted to see what was going on.

Yo, Artender!

* still looking inside the backpack *
Oh, hi G.

What are you doing with that backpack?

* sighs *
Teo has been sleeping inside my backpack instead of his actual bed for days now!

(Ooh, that makes a lot more sense.)
Well, can't you just wake him up?

I can but I don’t want to wake him up just yet.
He has yet to flourish.

Uhh, do you mean metaphorically or quite literally-

Sshh, be quiet!

As the two looked inside the bag, they saw PotaTeo waking up after a long sleep. He seemed relaxed. He jumped out of the backpack and to his dad's loving arms.

Aww, cute!

Good morning, Teo!
* smiles *
See, G?
My boy is one of a kind!

He sure is!

Artender puts PotaTeo down and tells him to join his sister. G knew this was his chance.

Say Artender?

Oh, what is it, G?

See, I was thinking... I could visit one of the 7 temples to get back my powers.
I think that would help our team immensely, you know?

...no. Its too dangerous for you to go on a solo mission.
Especially in... this state.

* raises his eyebrow *
What do you mean by that?

* sighs *
G, we both know you have not been in the best shape since Maizie took your powers away.
And I can’t let you get hurt!

...

So, let’s just wait for a bit more, focus on our current situation and then we can come up with another plan-

But those powers won't come back to me if I just wait it out!
* sighs *
I’m... useless without them.
I need to do this to help you guys out!

You are already helping us.

Artender points at his kids while they were drawing together.

Helping the little ones be happy in these trying times.

But I don't want to do that anymore!

G notices Artender looking at him judgementally.

Oh no no, don’t get the wrong idea!
Its not about the kids themselves at all.
It just that...
* puts his hand on the back of his head *
My place is on the battlefield!
I fought against Xtress himself, Artender! XTRESS!
I can handle a few Crystal Knights if I get my powers back-

Stop. Don’t speak any longer.
You are not going anywhere. And that’s final.
* turns his back *
I don't want anyone else to be in grave danger... ever again.
Especially after... losing him.

Artender looked at G with sorrow in his eyes. G knew exactly what he was referring to.

Am I clear?

* sighs *
Yeah... okay...

Thank you.
We will investigate the temples with a small group... eventually. You can try your chance then.

But when exactly?

Assuming we keep up this pace, we will be able to explore those areas in about... a month.

A MONTH?!
THATS TOO LATE!

G.
* looks back at him *
You are following the rules just like anybody else and I won’t hear you out any longer.
* reaches out his arm for a handshake *
Got it?

...okay.
* shakes his hand *
Have it your way.

Thank you.
Now, what were you planning on doing today?

(still annoyed) I don’t know.
Guess I was thinking of getting something for the kids.

* smiles *
Very good.
As for me, I was actually going to have a small meeting with Hood.
Speaking of whom...
* quickly looks around *
I wonder where she’s at-

* puts her hands on his shoulder *
Heya there, pumpkin.
Miss me?

* sighs *
(annoyed) Your timing is impecable as much as it is frustrating.

You know it!

* points at the table *
Come now, let us discuss things.

Let’s!

While Hood and Artender were talking, G took a peek at Artender’s backpack. It had the same design as his own. What a strange coincidence, G thought to himself.

He then shook his head to concentrate. This wasn’t the time to gush about someone’s personal belongings! He looked at Artender, with a frustrated expression. Artender didn’t understand how G felt at all. The feeling of becoming powerless, the stress of not making ammends and most of all... unable to protect his loved ones was disheartening to him. G took a deep breath and looked around. It was a great looking basement despite everything that has happened to them... but the stuff he could have prevented if he still had his powers… He knew what he had to do.

While the two were talking, G went to pack his stuff. He went to his room and picked up all of his necessary supplies. Next up was getting some snacks for his journey. Unfortunately for him however, the hut with the snacks was located very close to the main center itself.

So let me get this straight, pumpkin.
* points at Artender *
You want to send more scouting groups to find more people?

Precisely.

That won't help us in the long run since we arent taking back any ground-

B-but! We can’t exactly conquer any place above because we will be easier to spot by the crystal knights.

Oh, please!
We can fight them off!

They all carry their own crystallizer with them.
The only advantage we have over them is the number of our people.
And... we can’t afford to lose that too.

...

Say.
* looking through the notes *
You told me before this meeting that you had a new idea in mind.
Well, lets hear it!

Oh, now we are talking!
* chuckles *

You see pumpkin...

Hood puts her legs on the table and also puts her arms behind her head. She was living the life.

How about we investigate some of my old bases you MPC2 folks GENEROUSLY left untouched?
Perhaps we could find something useful inside them.
You know, perhaps something like-
* spins her finger in the air *
-those red rings!

Oh yeah.
We could try going for those...
* quickly shakes his head *
But no. I can’t make exceptions.

Eh?
What do you mean?

Just as I told G, we can't waste resources to look for those things right now.
Its simply far too risky.

The two suddenly hear a bunch of creaking sounds behind them. They both looked behind them, only to be met with a worried looking G. It looked like he accidentally dropped a few snacks to the ground while stocking up.

Uhh, what are you doing, G?

Oh, well...
* pretends to think *

I was just... getting snacks for myself and the kids, yeah!

Hm... I see.
* turns his back *
Oh well then, carry on.

(Phew.)

G quickly left the area shortly after. He felt really awful doing this but he knew they wouldn’t allow him to go along with his plans. He had to act even more cautiously than before. He quickly went to check the closet. It was filled with backpacks belonging to the next scouting group. He decided to put his backpack next to them to not look suspicious. He quickly asked for a map from the folks in the base for an “important mission”. Afterwards, he paid PotaTeo and Emily a visit and then patiently waited for the perfect opportunity.

That night, G stayed up until 3AM, waiting for everyone to go to sleep. Especially Artender. He got off from his bed and looked at the ceiling once again. It was now or never.

G quickly changed from his pajamas to his regular outfit and got out of his room. He tried walking as quiet as possible, hoping he wouldn’t wake anyone up. His first goal was to find his backpack and then getting out as soon as possible. The corridor that usually took him 3 minutes to walk from start to finish, took him almost 20 minutes to get to the other side. At the tail end of the corridor, G looked at his surrondings and saw a lone nightguard leaning back to the nearest wall, almost looking like he was about to fall asleep. G knew there would be guards around these parts. He remembered Artender telling him all about it. Oh right... Artender... G walked a few steps back to the corridor and stopped in front of one of the rooms. He lightly touched the room's door and whispered "Forgive me, Artender. I will be back soon, I promise." After he was done, he went back to check up on the nightguard. The nightguard was now fully asleep. G quickly (but also quietly) rushed towards the closet and was met with a mountain pile of backpacks. After searching for a few minutes, he found it. He didnt’t realize how heavy his backpack was but he wasn’t going to complain about that now.

It was now time for the next step of his plan. He started climbing the ladder and hoped the nightguard wouldnt see him. When he reached the hatchet, he was with another problem. There were sounds of two people bickering with each other. At first, G didn't know where these sounds were coming from but then, it clicked. There were guards outside too. G was frustrated beyond belief. He had a few mean things to say to Artender but he tried keeping his composure.

So uhm... hey.

Yeah, twerp?

Do you... feel safe with Hood in there?

Not really, no.
She's a lying snake!
But... if Artender trusts her, we have to trust her too.

I suppose so...
* sighs *
But I'm not sure if I can trust Artender and co. either?

(confused) What do you mean?

I mean... MPC2 could have prevented all of this from happening if they acted sooner...

Ssh, careful with what you are saying!

O-oh!
* covers her mouth *
Sorry!

It’s fine.
Don’t panic.

Yeah, my bad... it’s just been on my mind for a while.

I get that.
* sighs *
I can’t help but think about that sometimes too.

There was a small period of awkward silence between the two guards afterwards. Both didn’t know what else to talk about after that topic was brought up.

So... what’s for breakfast?

I wrote it on the billboard a few hours ago.

You... did?

Yeah?!
* sighs *
Have you been paying attention at all?!

Give me a break, I just got here a few days ago!

G knew he could take advantage of the tention. He reached out to his pockets to find anything to distract the two. He found a small stick in his pocket and decided to go for it. He lightly lifted up the hatch and threw the stick in the bushes. The two guards looked at the berry bushes with fear and confusion in their eyes.

W-what was that?!

Only one way to find out... Come on!

After the two went to check the bushes, G quickly opened the hatch and made a run for it to the forest. And hopefully, he wasn't noticed. Even if he was caught, he could always make a run for it. He knew this forest like the back of his hand, after all. But he made a critical mistake. The hatch was left wide open and the guards were... confused, to say the least.

W-why did it open on its own?

I dont know nor do I care.
* points at the hatch *
Check the base to see if anyone got inside.

Okay...

Sorry, what were you sayin?
* purposefully looks around all confused *
Huh, must have been the wind.

You are the worst.

Just shut up and check if something’s wrong!

G sighed in relief. After all this time, he was finally free. He was able to plan something and execute it perfectly... all by himself! He looked at the stump one last time and waved goodbye at the guards whom couldnt see him. He still felt regret for his actions but he hoped this would pay off in the end. He turned his back and readied himself for the adventure ahead.

Back at the Crystal Kingdom, the people were scared for their lives.

"Is she going to be alright?!"
"Is the Queen okay?"
" Did she...lose?"
" Are we safe?!"

Maizie had been dealing with endless bantering like this from her people ever since she returned from the battlefield. The people were all scared after the battle with Xtress. During the fight, some crystal knights noticed Maizie struggling to keep on going while holding her heart in agony. And if that wasn’t enough, Xtress left a small crack on the crystal walls, putting everyone's lives at risk. While she was able to calm down most of the population with her recent announcement, one of the crystal knights was still worried sick for her. The worried crystal knight spotted their queen on her way to the prison cell.

My Queen, are you alright?!

I-
* coughs *
I'm fine, Clara.
Just a little hiccup, that's all.

But you don’t seem healthy at all!
Are you sure you are alright?!

I AM...

Maizie points her staff at Clara in frustration.

-FINE!

Clara was shocked by beyond belief. Did her Queen just... threaten her?

* her eyes widen *
I-I'm sorry, Clara.
* puts her staff away *
I didn’t mean to do that.
I’m just a bit stressed due to... recent events.

I-I understand, my Queen.
I just... Wanted you to be okay.

I appreciate the concern... A lot, really.
But I will be fine.
* gets angry *
I can’t just let that sorcerer get away with this!
I should have won that fight!

Don’t go hard on yourself, my queen.
I know you are so much stronger than he could ever wish to be!

… thank you, Clara. You are truly one of my bests.

Maizie looked at the other side of the corridor with sheer determination. She had to unleash her project to the world before it was too late.

This has to be worth it... it WILL be worth it!
* looks at her hand *
It's our one chance at moving to the next step of MY plan!
* looks back at Clara *
Clara?

Yes, my Queen?

Calm the people down, tell them that the puny resistance will be no more.

* bows *
As you wish, my Queen.

And...

Hm?

Take care of yourself.

Clara, for the first time in forever, smiled at someone and then waved goodbye to her Queen. Maizie smiled back and unknowingly blushed

in response. That smile... the last time Maizie saw Clara smiling like that was the night she was crystallized. She knew Clara had some feelings for her back then but what if... What if I have feelings for her too, Maizie thought to herself. Maizie quickly shook her head before she could turn fully red. No... This wasn't the time to think about that. Not now... When she reached her destination, she knocked on Sarpo's door. It was fun to mock the already broken.

Hello there, Mr. Fields!
I hope you are still having fun in here!
* chuckles *
Because, your usefullness is about to run out REAL soon.

...

What's the matter?
Scared of little old me?

Sarpo still kept shut. He didnt want her to find out about the upgrades Cloe has been bringing him for the past few days.

Or perhaps, you are waiting for my invention to show up.
* chuckles *
Don't you worry your pretty little head!
It's on its way, I ordered my crystal knights to bring it here.

Maizie started slowly walking in circles around Sarpo. Sarpo was starting to panic. He had to change the topic before she noticed anything different about him.

So... How did the mission go, eh?

(confused) What are you talking about?

I heard from one of your crystal knights that you guys went on a war against Xtress.
Thats all.
* smirks *
So how did it go?

...

If you aren’t gloating about it, I assume you guys lost.

WHY YOU LITTLE-
* picks up her staff *
Watch your words with me, Mr. Fields!
You are beneath me.

(sarcasm) Sureee, I am!

Peh. Sarcasm will get you nowhere.
* puts her staff away *
Besides, we won't be needing you once my project is done.

Before Sarpo could respond, he sees two Crystal knights bringing in Maizie's project with a cart. It was covered with a blanket to hide its appearance.

We have brought your secret project, my Queen.

Oh yes, we did!

Thanks, you two.
You can start your breaks earlier for today, consider yourselves lucky.

Sweet!

Heck yeah!
The Crystal Queen is the best!

The crystal knights left the room, leaving only Sarpo, Maizie and the mysterious project.

What... is that?

* chuckles and looks at Sarpo *
Allow me to show you.

As Maizie took off the blanket, Sarpo couldn’t help but shake in fear at what he was seeing. A robot was under that blanket this whole time! It was lumped over, presumably because of it not having a power source yet. But it wasn’t just any ordinary robot! The robotic claws... the metal gray hat... The shades covering its eyes.. it was a robotic replica of himself! But unlike him, it was fully made of metal, it was like looking at a twisted mirror.

Wha- What is this supposed to be?!

Oh sweet Sarpo... Isn’t it obvious?...
* chuckles *
You can be so incautious sometimes-

Unexpectedly, Maizie suddenly sneezed right next to Sarpo. He was even more confused once he noticed... the blood on the floor? What was going on with Maizie?

A-are you-

SILENCE!
* sniffs *
I will not tolerate any more of your pointless dialogue!

...

* chuckles *
See... isn’t the silence better?

Sarpo was so confused about everything up to that point. He wanted to ask so many questions but he knew none of them would get a satisfying answer.

What are you going to use... Metal Sarpo for?!

(confused) Metal Sarpo?
* shakes her head *
No, no, no.

Maizie looks at Sarpo with a devilish smile.

His name is Unit SRP!

“And he's the key to destroying your friends once and for all!”

Meanwhile, G was sitting next to a fireplace, hoping it would be enough for him to not get a cold. Even though he was still upset over running away without saying goodbye to his friends (Artender especially), he hoped they would understand his situation once he got back... or when they found out. He was walking by himself for a few hours and just recently sat down to relax. It wasn’t as bad as he feared. He didn’t encounter any Crystal knights... yet. And the weather seemed nice. He knew the journey ahead would be a long one so a small rest was more than justified. G rested on a small log, using it as a pillow, to watch the stars. They were just as gorgeous as the last time he saw them… Afterwards, G got up up and reached out to his backpack to get some marshmallows. He remembered putting a few packs of them next to the medical supplies. He opened his backpack, only to be greeted by...

T-Teo?!

PotaTeo was opening and closing his eyes repeatedly after G shouted. G could tell he just woke up from his nap. He looked just as confused as G himself.

I-I don't understand, why are you here?!

PotaTeo finally got back his senses and started freaking out. He was jumping around everywhere. Where were they? What was going on? Where was his family?!

This can't be...
* looks inside the backpack closely *
Unless...

There were some medical supplies, a few packages of milk and... toys? G suddenly realized what was going on. He picked the wrong backpack!

Oh no...

G noticed PotaTeo looking angrily at him. He wanted answers, here and now.

I-I'm so sorry, Teo.
I was just going on a solo mission by myself but I accidentally picked the wrong bag!
I promise!

PotaTeo looked like he still wasn't convinced. There was more to this story than G was letting on.

What else do you want from me?!
I said I was sorry!

PotaTeo didn't want to listen to him any longer. He jumped away from G and decided to go back home... with or without him!

H-hey, no!
Teo, come back!

But PotaTeo was determined. He didn't want to spend anymore time with G. He was determined, yes... but how he was going to find his way back was an entirely different question.

It's too dangerous out there!
* notices PotaTeo looking back at him *
Please, you will get yourself hurt!

PotaTeo turned his back once again with a frustrated expression as he started rolling towards the woods at high speeds. G could only dream of stopping him. He watched as PotaTeo disappeared into the woods, nowhere to be seen. G looked down in shame. He knew Artender was going to be mad but telling him that he lost PotaTeo in the process? That was a death sentence for him. But suddenly, PotaTeo started rolling back towards G, much to his surprise.

Teo! You are back!
I knew you would come around!
* opens his arms *
Come here, little guy!

But G didn’t notice why PotaTeo was rolling in the opposite direction. He would find out the hard way as a mutant beast emerged from the woods and suddenly rushed towards G at high speeds.

EEK!
WHAT IS THAT?!

G quickly dodged to his right and looked at the beast in fear. It was a mutant crow with more wings than he could count. Suddenly, he remembered why this felt so familiar. He fought against one of these beasts back in... Mount Neverends, yeah, that's what it was. But back then, he had two friends backing him up, not to mention his powers too. He looked around in panic for PotaTeo and saw him trying to fight back against the beast by growing in size. But even PotaTeo's powers weren’t enough as the beast threw, a now normal sized PotaTeo, back at G. He quickly grabbed PotaTeo midair before he got hurt.

I'm so sorry for putting you in harms way, little dude.
* puts him back to the ground *
Run as far as you can from here, I wont let this beast hurt you.

Even though PotaTeo was still mad at G, he didn’t want one of his family to be hurt. He lightly hit G's knee and looked at him with determination. The two smiled back at each other. Either the two of

them would make it out okay or neither of them would. But before the two could fight back, a shadowy figure marched in and punched the beast on the face. The beast flew away in panic after such a powerful blow to the face. The figure takes the dust off from his hands and stood there confidently. G didn’t understand what was going on, he didn’t know anyone whom had the strength to go toe to toe with one of these beasts... Unless...

No need to thank me, strangers!
* shows off *
You can go on with your merry way now!
Those beasts mean nothing but trouble!

Array?!

W-what-
* almost falls down *
G?!

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REscRIBBLED
BOW AND ARRAY
TURTLEDOODLE1
SOHEKUN

CHAPTER 30: BOW AND ARRAY

So Mr. Fields... What do you think?

I... I dont know what to say...

* chuckles *
Good... Very good...
* puts her shoulder on the robots head *
As you can see... Unit SRP here is capable of MANY things.
He can fly, shoot crystal lasers out of his hands and most importantly, hes super fast!

But... I dont get it.
Why didn’t you just crystallize me instead?
Why go through all this effort?!

While Sarpo expected Maizie to respond with a cold threat, instead she started laughing to herself. She seemed to be enjoying this... more than she probably should have.

Oh man...
* wipes off the tear from her eyes *
You are hopeless!
Of course, I could have crystallized you and been done with it... But no.
You are weak. Pathetic even.

Sarpo didn’t know how to respond.

You have lost so many battles up to this point, what made you think you would have done me and this kingdom any good?

The people who built your robotic half wasted this technology on you...

Maizie takes a step back and starts swinging around her staff. It was almost like she wasn't taking this seriously at all.

But I will admit, I have always been fascinated by your cybernetics since we first met.
I thought you were strong back then…
But little did I realize how reckless you truly were.

You don't know anything about me!
Stop acting like you do!

Maybe... maybe not.
Doesn't change the fact that you are a weakling.
* grins *
So back to our topic...
When I successfully lured MPC2 to my kingdom, I knew I had to pay extra attention to you... Or more specifically, to your cybernetics.
I wanted to perfect this technology before I disposed of you.

Oh yeah?
What made you think you could improve it?!

Oh, please!
I already invented the crystallizer...
* Rolls her eyes *
-all by myself! Yes!

Sarpo could tell she was lying. Those eyes weren't kidding anyone but herself.

But really, what matters at the end is that.. you are still the same man
I fought all those months ago.
Nothing really changed with you...
* points the staff at herself *
While I became the ruler of these lands thanks to YOUR ignorance.
So really, I have got to thank you for... all of this!

Y-you...

Oh? Did I hear something?
Surely not-

YOU ARE SICK IF YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY THIS!

* Chuckles *
I dont think... I KNOW!

Maizie turns her back and looks over to the robot again. She grabs a screwdriver and takes off Unit SRP's chest cavity to reveal an empty slot. Sarpo assumed this is where the power source would go.

What do you plan on using to power him?

Im so glad you asked!

Maizie reaches out to her pockets and shows Sarpo a very familiar, red object.

Is..is that-

One of the red rings? Yeah.
I sent a few crystal knight groups to investigate Hood's old bases to see if they could find one of THESE bad boys.
It should be more than enough to power this beast!
* starts walking in circles around Sarpo again *
You know? You would think MPC would just destroy those buildings and everything inside them once the war ended.
But alas...
It's yet another thing you supposed "heroes" forgot to take care of. * chuckles *
It's alright though, it will just be a part of MPC's increasingly awful legacy.
Wouldn’t you say?

Don’t you DARE insult Carlos’ legacy!

So, what if I do? Huh?
* smirks *
That's right, you can’t do anything back!

Sarpo was getting more and more frustrated with each passing second. He really wanted to activate his upgrades and cave her head in but... He wasn’t strong enough yet. Nor was this the time to drop his cover.

Wanna know the best part, Sarpo?
The one who found this red ring is someone you are already familiar with.
* claps her hands *
Allow me to introduce him.

And there he was. With his fish loving self intact. Bushra was the one who found the red ring after all! He looked just as confused as Sarpo after first seeing the robot.

See? Look how much that bites!
One of your closest friends will lead to the downfall of everyone you ever loved!

Uh...
* points at Unit SRP *
What is this?

Oh.
* shakes her head *
We were just talking about this actually.
Its a-

Whoa...
* touches its hat *
Is this a robotic Sarpo?!

* sigh *
Yes, yes it is.
* points at the door *
Can you leave now, please?
I will call you to my throne room later.

Oh, of course!
* looks over to the shackled Sarpo *
Hope to see you soon, Sarpo!
Dont worry, Ms. Kitty cat is all okay after the fight!
She’s hanging out with Terry and Lydia right now-

DO YOU MIND?!

Oops, sorry.
* tips his hat *
See ya, Sarpo.

Bushra leaves in a hurry, leaving only the two (plus the robot) in the room once more.

Now then...
* looks at the red ring *
Let’s see what happens, shall we?

Before Sarpo could respond, Maizie puts the red ring inside the robot and closes its chest cavity. Afterwards, the robot starts floating and spews out red light everywhere in the room.

After a few seconds, the robot went back to its tumbling position but quickly got up with its, ever so present, deadly red eyes.

[UNIT SRP: ONLINE.]
* bows *
[READY TO SERVE THE CRYSTAL QUEEN.]

Nooo... NO!

HA HA!
Welcome to the world, my newest creation!

" We have MUCH to discuss!"

G couldnt believe what he was seeing. It all felt like a dream.

Array..?
Is that you?

Array dropped everything he was doing and rushed to hug G. It felt like an eternity since they last saw each other.

G!
I can’t believe you are actually here!
* wipes off his tears *
I- I thought you were-

Ssh... its okay now, Array.
We are together now.
And that’s what matters.

The two share a long hug while PotaTeo was trying to get their attention.

The potato dude is here too?
* picks him up *
Come here little guy, join in the fun!

PotaTeo jumped around in excitement. He was happy to see his friend again too.

* looks at Array's gauntlet *
Are- are you-

Yes, I'm fine. No worries.
The gauntlet has been doing nothing but wonders for me since we got it sorted out.

Thats good, that’s really good.

* looks around *
As much as I would love to continue chatting out here... We better get to a safe place first.
There could be more of those beasts or those crystal zombies!

O-okay!
* picks up PotaTeo *
But where can we go?
They can pop out of anywhere!

* puts his left hand on G's shoulder *
Trust me, G.
I know what I'm doing.
Just follow me!

Alright...

Array led them through the forest and stopped in front of one of the trees.

Think you can climb up trees?

Heck yeah, I can.
Don’t you forget, I used to live in these parts too!

* chuckles *

He he... Right!

The trio climbed up the tree and after a while, they were greeted to ladders leading to a small tree house.

Woah... You built another tree house?!

Sure did! Besides a few flying beasts, I'm positive this place is bad guy proof!

Awesome!

G and PotaTeo started walking around the place. There was a bunch of furniture made out of wood everywhere. The house even had a balcony too! Array really did make himself home here.

Come on in, guys!
The living room isn’t gonna fill by itself!

G laughed at his quirky remark and followed behind him. He really missed him a lot. When the two got to the living room, they saw that Array had already prepared stuff for them. There were a bunch of wooden plates and spoons on the table. G knew it was time to eat, he was already hungry enough as it is before the beast even attacked them.

Wowie, you are quick!

You gotta be when you have guests around!
* smiles *
Want to guess what we are eating for today?

Sure! Hm...
* starts thinking*
Is it... rice?

Nope!

Array picks up the nearby pan and pours out a weird soup that G had never seen before in his life. G noticed Array wearing an apron with “Best Cook!” written on it.

* looks at the soup in front of him *
Oh.

I call it "natural soup."
Let’s eat, guys!

G takes a spoon off the soup and almost pukes from it.

Oh dear, are you alright G?!

Y-yeah, I'm-
* stops himself from puking *
I’m fine...

G looked at PotaTeo and was to surprised to see him actually enjoying the soup. G wished he had chicken and rice at that moment.

Don’t... don’t force yourself to eat it if you dont want to, G.
It’s not everyones cup of tea.

N-no, it would be rude of me otherwise.

G takes another spoon off it but he was able to digest this one much easier.

I appreciate the thought.
It took me a long time to get used to its taste too.
So don’t worry about it.

Array sits down with his legs crossed, patiently waiting for the two to explain everything that had happened to them. Meanwhile, G pushes away the plate in pain, he really couldn’t take much more of the soup. But at the same time, he was upset over possibly breaking Array's lovable heart again.

Now that you finished your food...

Array looked at the two like an excited little kid waiting for his ice cream.

Are the others safe too?
I thought you guys were all crystallized!

(confused) Where did you get that?
Some of us are still alive and kicking!

“Some of us”?

Well... Me, Artender and the kids are all safe.
Cloe is acting as double Agent in the Crystal Kingdom while she and

Sarpo are planning something over there.

That’s good.
But wait... what about Bushra?
* realizes G looking down in guilt *
Is he-

He... He sacrificed himself to save us.
He got crystallized in front of my eyes...

Oh my gosh, thats terrible!
* looks at G *
A-Are you alright-

Yeah... I’m just... Still hurting from it.

I... See.

Array knew he had to change the topic before this turned for the worse. At the same time however, he couldn’t believe that Bushra was crystallized. I mean... this was BUSHRA they were talking about. G and the others must have been through a lot, Array thought.

But... How did you guys make it out of there alive?

What do you mean?

I mean...

When these Crystal Knights started popping up, I went to check Diamond City for you guys, only to see it completely surronded by Crystal walls!
How did you guys manage to escape from there?

Well... We weren't in the city when this whole mess first started, actually.
We were trying to escape from the Crystal Kingdom itself!

You don't mean... THE Crystal Kingdom, right?

I assure you, I do.
It was a miracle that we made it out of there!
Though, we wouldnt have been able to make it without... him.

Ah...
* Takes a sip from his soup *
I see.
I'm frankly just surprised you guys managed to escape from there with that much security!

I mean, there wasn't THAT much security outside while we were trying to escape.
* Raises his eyebrow *
Did something happen?

Well, I have been investigating the kingdom for the past few days and they have increased their security tenfold.

Huh, why is that?

* shrugs *
Your guess is as good as mine.
I thought it was either a resistance group pushing for the offensive or hopefully, you guys!
But since you don’t seem to know what happened...
I’m not sure either.

Hm... that’s strange.

Sure is.
* Touches his hair *
Ugh, is something stuck on my hair?

Array notices a leaf was stuck to his hair but before he could take it off himself, G leaned towards him and took it off instead. The two both blushed without either of them realizing. Only PotaTeo figured out what these two's deal was.

W-well, anyways!
* shakes his head from embarrassment *
What were you doing during that time?

O-oh, right!
* also shakes his head *
Can you elobrate?

You know, the time we... Split apart.

...oh.
* leans back to the wall *

Right.
Well after I left, I went adventuring by myself and wanted to explore the mystical elements of Perdiah.
So far... I haven’t found much.
(Not like I had much choice anyway.)
I had to put a halt to my travels when this whole mess started.
Afterwards, I decided to build this place for myself and possible survivors...
I didn’t manage to find any... except one.

...and?
* looks around *
What... happened to them?

I... couldn’t save them before they were crystallized.
I had to focus on losing my trail.
* sighs *
The Crystal Kingdom's reign is just too powerful!

Sigh... figures.
* holds Array’s hand *
But I will always hold out hope that we will be able to end this nightmare once and for all!

I hope so too.

While Array was looking at PotaTeo still eating his soup, G noticed him wearing something. Something like a... necklace?

Oh, what's that?

Huh?

The necklace!
I have never expected you of all people to wear one.
* grins *
New do for the occasion?

Array blushes out of embarrassment and lighlty pushes G away.

Aw, stop it!
* pulls out the necklace *
You mean this old thing?

Yeah!
Not to say it doesn’t suit you though, I think it looks great on you!

Thank you..
* shakes his head *
A-anyways!
After Xtress possessed me, (urgh.), I wanted to find a way to stop him from ever trying that again!
In one of my travels, I found this in the mines and decided to take it with me as a lucky charm.
But when a beast attacked me for the first time, it got significantly weaker as it got closer to the gem’s radius.
I’m not sure if it also weakens Xtress himself but I have been keeping this with me ever since then.
Just in case.

Ooh, thats neat!

Yeah!
It doesn’t look too bad either, honestly!
Kinda fits the vibe I’m going for!

I agree with that!

* takes a sip of water *
Speaking of, where is you guys' hideout?

Oh yeah!
We built an underground base under Town Mercia.
Perhaps you have heard of it?

Nope, never been there.

Huh.

Yeah.
It's just a place that hasn't really interested me personally.
* shrugs *
But oh well, you can always show me there later!
* finishes his soup *
Man, that was a good one!
* looks at PotaTeo *
Glad you liked it as well, little dude!

PotaTeo jumps around in happiness.

As for you, G... I will find you something else to eat, don't you worry.

* twirls his hair *

Thanks for being so thoughtful...

No problem!
* points his finger to the air *
Oh yeah, there was something that I wanted to ask you guys about.

Oh? Sure, I'll bite.
What is it?

What were you guys... doing back there?

(confused) What do you mean?

I heard you screaming for Teo out there multiple times.
* raises his eyebrow *
What was that all about?
G notices PotaTeo looking at him angrily.

I- Well...You see-

Array looked really confused. G finally gives in and sighs. He wanted to be honest with someone about this situation.

I... Lost my powers since we fought against the Queen.
I have been feeling so weak ever since then.
I was nothing but a burden to my team so I just... wanted to get those powers back.
No matter what it costed.
I ran away from the base hours ago, thinking I would be going on a solo mission.

But instead... I accidentally dragged Teo into this mess too.
* looks at PotaTeo *
I’m truly sorry for forcibly seperating you from your folks, Teo.
I will make sure you stay safe until we are back.

PotaTeo looked away from G in sadness.

I understand, G.
While I agree that what you did was wrong... I’m glad you are being honest with us.

R-really?

Yeah!
* holds his hand *
I hope Teo will be able to forgive you too.

Array whispers at G while PotaTeo was still avoiding eye contact with him.

Don’t feel bad about him acting this way.
You just need to give him some time.

G sighed. Array was right, rushing this thing through would make their relationship even worse as a result.

Well... How were you planning on getting back your powers in the first place?

By saying a wish in one of the 7 temples? Duh?

Oh, right. Funny story actually...
* stands up *
I was thinking of going on another temple quest starting with tomorrow, actually!

Wait... really?!

Yup!
Talk about a coincidence, am I right?!

Sweet!
* stands up *
With the three of us, we will get back to the Vengeful Rubies in no time!

The what now?

Long story, I will explain it later.
* cracks his knuckles *
Well then, let’s get ready for our newest adventure!

Heck yeah!
I have a map with me that shows the locations of the temples...
* looks around *
I swear it was around here somewhere...

Don’t sweat it, Array.
* pulls out a map from his pockets *

I was carrying a map with me too!

Oh, nice!

* opens the map *
So, what’s the closest temple...

Hm… I think...
* points at the map *
It’s this one.

Well, what’s that one called?

Oh, it's called the Temple That Never Stomps!

...you gotta be kidding me.

Back at the Crystal Kingdom, Maizie was waiting for Bushra to arrive at her throne room. There was a table setup for her dinner time. Meanwhile, Unit SRP was standing next to her with a menacing cold stare. Maizie hears a knock on the door and orders Unit SRP to open the door.

Sorry queenie, had a little... accident while coming here.

It’s alright, Bushra.
Take a seat.

Bushra sits down on the chair right in front Maizie. He realized she was getting ready for dinner.

Before we start... I would like to thank you for your contributions.
Most specifically, for bringing me those shiny red rings!

No problem, your highness.
* shows off *
Anytime.
* tapping his foot *
So... what did you need me for exactly?

I wanted you to meet with Unit SRP.

The what now?
* looks to his right *
Ooh right, this thing!
Gotta say, not a big fan of the design.
Seems a bit over the top.
But...
* lightly pushes him back *
I met with it already.

No no, I want you to personally interact with him.

"Him"?
Uh... Sure?

Bushra was very confused but he knew the queen knew best. So, he stared into Unit SRP’s cold, dead eyes.

Uh... I’m not sure he likes me.

[UNIT NOT RECOGNIZED.]
[WHAT IS YOUR DESIGNATED NAME?]

Uh... I'm Bushra Stoked.
The handsome Crystal knight?
* raises his hand for a handshake *
Nice to meet you too?

["BUSHRA STOKED".]
[LOGGED UNDER: ALLY & EGOTIST.]

HEY!

* chuckles *
I think you two will get along very well.

Well...
* tries to ignore the robot *
You got anything else you want me to do, queenie?
I’m a busy lad.

I’m glad you asked!
* picks up her staff and points at them *
You two are tasked with taking down the resistance and bringing them to justice!
* smiles *

I have already assigned a group for you to command.

W-what, me?!
I will be... a commander?!

No. Not you, Bushra.
You will be second in command to...
* points at the robot *
Him.

WHAT?!

[THAT'S RIGHT.]
[I ONLY SERVE THE CRYSTAL QUEEN HERSELF.] [LOGGING THIS UNDER: HILARIOUS.]

Yeesh...

Now that it’s settled... pack your stuff Bushra!

“You will be meeting with your old friends very soon!”

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
INNER CONFLICT
TURTLEDOODLE1
SOHEKUN

CHAPTER 31: INNER CONFLICT

It was an interesting day on Planet Perdiah. While everyone was doing their own stuff all around the planet, none of them knew this was a monumental day for Perdiah as a whole. The day Perdiah would change forever.

Artender cleared his eyes and looked around his room. He suddenly woke up because of a nearby cock-a-doodle-doo. Another day, another dollar; he thought to himself. After changing his clothes, he went to check on his kids. Emily was still sleeping, as he expected. He was worried that her interaction with one of the Rascals would change her personality but surprisingly, it didn't. Artender wasn't sure what to make of it. Maybe some of them actually weren't… bad people? He quickly shook his head and looked at the sleeping Emily again. This wasn't the time to think these things. He kissed her on the forehead and went to look for his son.

Unsurprisingly, he wasn't in his cardboard box bed. Artender went to the closet with the bags inside to wake up PotaTeo but to his shock, he wasn't there either.

T-Teo?!

Artender threw away the bag he was holding and started looking inside each and every bag on there. He was still holding out hope. His son HAD to be here. It was only a matter of time until he found him. Before he could tore open another bag, he felt someone lightly touching his left shoulder and freaked out as a response.

AAAH!

Ssssh, do you want to wake up the entire place you stupid moron?!

It was Hood, with her pajamas, no less. She had eyebags under her eyes and seemed really tired.

You-

Yeah, yeah.
Save your insults for later.
* clears her eyes *
I got here to check up on the guards but saw one of the former MPC2 members making a mess like a toddler.

…

What are you even doing anyways?!

I-It’s Teo!
I have been looking around for him!

…that’s it?
Is that what the fuss is about?

Don’t undermine my son like that!

Hey, you don’t have to take it as a personal attack!

Whatever...
* still looking inside other bags *
He usually sleeps in my backpack instead of his own bed but now, I

can’t even find him.
I thought maybe he accidentally fell inside one of the other bags but...
I don’t know!

Artender notices Hood looking at “his” bag and gets annoyed.

Are you even listening?!

Yeah, yeah.
* picks up the bag *
Say pumpkin?
What do you think about this backpack?

Well... it’s mine, duh?

You sure?

* confused *
Yeah?
Why wouldn’t it be?

* Chuckles *
You might wanna take a peek inside... more carefully.

* raises his eyebrow *
Okay?

Artender took the backpack from Hood’s hands and looked inside again. There were a bunch of snacks and other types of supplies inside… but he didn’t put these here.

B-but-
* flips around the bag *
This isn’t my bag!

See? Now you are getting it!
Now... Do you remember who this belongs to?

…G?
I think?

I don’t know about you but the answer seems pretty clear to me.
* yawns *
Teo going missing, G not being in his room, the mismatched backpacks...

G...
* tightens the bag in anger *
G isn’t in his room?!

Nope.

So that means...
* looks at the stairs *
Oh, G…

“What did you do...”

Wake up, gang!
It’s go time!

Ugh... 5 more minutes… Please…

Come on, G!
We have to get a move on!
* looks at the awaken PotaTeo *
Is he always like this?

PotaTeo does a “sometimes” sign with his left hand.

G...
* shakes him *
Just wake up already!

Oug… Fine…
* gets up and clears his eyes *
I still don’t know why you woke us up this early...

So we could have a head start, dummie!

* chuckles *
What if I fainted from a lack of sleep, what would happen then?

Well... we would have to carry you there.
Right, potato man?

PotaTeo gives him a thumbs down.

Ack-

Don’t sweat it dude, I will be fine.
* stands up *
I was just exaggerating.

Y-yeah!
Of course I knew that-
* sniffs *
Totally.

Okay so...
* looks around *
Are we all ready for this?

I was BORN ready!

PotaTeo reluctantly gives him a thumbs up. He didn’t seem excited but he didn’t seem mad either. G knew he had to win over him... somehow.

So... lead the way, G!

Oh right!
* pulls out the map *
Okay, let’s see here...
So Temp Never Stops-

The Temple That Never Stops, actually.

…

Erm, sorry!
* smirks *
Go on, please!

…as I was saying!
Temp Never Stops is not too far away from here.
It will probably take us less than a full day of walking to reach there...
I think.

You are not sure?

Yeah... I calculated it in my head so it’s like a guess more than anything.

Oooh, I see.
Well… good thing we are getting started now then!
Perhaps we can arrive there earlier than we thought!

You are right!
* reaches out his hand *
When we see the temple, the first one who reaches there wins, okay?

Pfft… alright!
* chuckles *
Just like old times, eh?

“Yup, just like old times!”

Is the radio working?

Almost...
* backs away *
There we go!

Good.
* walks towards the radio *
Cloe, can you hear me?

Y-yes!
I can, Artender!
Is something wrong?

I was going to ask if you heard about G or… Teo over there.

No? Not really.
Did something happen?

We think G... ran away last night.
And he might have accidentally took Teo with him.

Oh gosh, why would he do that?!

He most likely went to one of the 7 temples to get his powers back.

Oh dear.
Well, I don’t know if they got crystallized or not.
I’m sure Maizie would have made a big stink about it if they did though.

Well, all the same... thanks for your help, Cloe.
Good luck out there.
Say hi to Sarpo from me too.

Will do.

And let us know if Xtress tries attacking the kingdom again.
We could turn that into an advantage.

Of course.
* hears a female voice coming behind her *
Sorry gotta go, bye!

Before Artender could respond back, the radio started making weird buzzing sounds. Artender sighed and turned it off.

So, what now?

I-I don’t really know.

Hm... perhaps you could go and try to find them?

I don’t know... I can’t leave my responsibilities here.
Not to mention, Emily is still here.

But pumpkin, what if the potato gets hurt?
Or worse?!

...

Exactly!
That’s why you NEED to go and find them, Artender.
I will take care of things here!

I-

NO!
PLEASE DON’T LEAVE!

Before the two realized what was going on, Emily hugged Artender.

E-Emily?
How much did you hear of that-

Please don’t go!
I... I don’t want to stay with… her.

Oh, please!
What could I possibly do with your absence?!

No... no, Emily’s right.
As much as I hate to say it... I trust G to take care of my son.
My place is here now.

Peh, whatever, your choice.
* leaves the room *
Don’t come to me crying if he gets crystallized.

WHY YOU-

Before Artender could hurt Hood, Emily stopped him. He looked at Emily and saw her shaking her head in disapproval. This wasn’t the way to go about things.

Yeah... you are right, little one.
Thanks for stopping her from getting in my head.

N-no problem?
* puts her finger on her chin *
What does “getting in someone’s head” mean?

“I- I will explain it to you when you get older.”

Ugh... are we there yet?

The group was already tired from walking. At first, the journey started out well. They stopped occasionally to eat snacks and then continued as planned. But as time went on, all 3 of them were starting to get more and more tired. Not even the breaks were enough anymore.

I think...
* looks at the map again *
We have half an hour left!

I hope you are right about that...
* looks at PotaTeo *
Do you want to rest inside my backpack, little one?

PotaTeo nods in the most tired way possible. He jumps inside Array's backpack.

Coolio.

Afterwards, Array looked at G again. Even though it's been a whole day since they reunited, he still couldn't believe he was with G again. Especially after the Crystal Queen's attack. Things have been much more complicated since the first temple business, Array thought to himself. He didn't know what Xtress did with his body while he was possessed by him. Array couldn't ask Team Bushra what exactly happened afterwards either because of all of his baggage. It was simply not the time for that. But now? Perhaps he could…

Hey.

Hey, Array.
What's up?

So uhm... want to talk?

Sure!

I mean it would certainly make things less boring.

That’s one way of saying it!
* fake laughs *
Well... what did Xtress say... while he was in my body?

Oh?

You know... the whole first temple thing.

Yeah, yeah, I know what you are talking about.

* waits for a few seconds *
And..?

Truth be told... It was a strange experience.
He was using your voice to speak to me.
He said something about a “loved one”... I think.

Huh... I see.

I don’t know how much of that was true so I didn’t really think about it all that much.

Okay, I understand.
I just want you to forget about all of that.

He could have lied!

Yeah, that only seems fair.
I mean, you weren't really... you when he was in control so I understand.

(Oh gosh, he is totally getting suspicious of my feelings for him, I just know it!)
(What am I gonna do?!)

You were gonna say something?

N-no, no!
Nothing!
Absolutely nothing!

Okay then...

(Phew...)

So according to the map, the temple should be... here!

The two looked around and saw nothing. Nothing but a giant crater, that is.

What in Perdiah...
* looks at the crater *
Where did this come from?

I don’t know but it’s weird...
The crater itself seems oddly... perfect?

What do you mean?

I mean, look at the curves!
The edges and corners!
This seems deliberately made, like something has been travelling between these craters with perfect accuracy!

Suddenly, the whole area turned dark. It looked like they were drowning in the shadows.

Uh, did the sun set early today?
* looks at G *
G? What’s wrong?

G was left speechless as he was pointing up. Array looked where he was pointing at and saw a floating continent trying to land at the crater they were next to. Array quickly pushed G and himself away from the crater as the continent landed perfectly on the area.

Woah...

So, that’s how it works!
(On second thought, maybe the name should have been a giveaway.)

A floating continent?!
Really?!

Yeah, I suppose so!
What a fascinating temple!

You could say that...

The two slowly walk towards The Temple That Never Stops. It was just as majestic as Temple Skulled, perhaps even prettier!

So... I guess we can all enter freely now!

Wait, isn’t there a challenge before these temples let somebody in?

Well, maybe finding this temple in the first place IS the challenge!

Hm... good point.

Array picks up PotaTeo from his backpack for him to see the temple too. He seemed amazed by the design of it as well.

* notices the signs *
Hold on, let me translate these too.

Alright.

“Once every blue moon, the temple rises from afar.”
“To get inside, one must challenge a person they care deeply about.”

“The race is on!”

The two looked at each other like sad puppies.

I-I can’t challenge you!

C-calm down, G.
We can find a workaround for this!
* sits down *
The text says something about a “race”.
So that means the challenge will be a “race to the finish” type deal.

And?

I can just lose to you on purpose so you can enter the temple that way!

Oh, good idea!

Yup!
Bet the temple didn’t think of that, hah!

* cracks his knuckles *
Okay, let’s get this started then!
I can’t wait to get my powers back!

As the two pressed on the buttons located on the temple’s opening, a flash of light surrounded the area and suddenly a race track was in front of them. G didn’t know if this was a hallucination or something

the temple changed in the real world but he wasn't going to question that. For now, he had to reach the finish line before Array. It should be a piece of cake, G thought to himself. He looked to his left and saw Array giving him a thumbs up. G didn't know when they were going to start but he patiently waited. Suddenly a deep voice started counting down. 3… 2… 1… GO!

And so, the race was on! G started running as fast he could to the finish line. He knew Array wasn't going to catch up to him on purpose but he just wanted to make sure. But soon enough, he was shocked when he saw someone in front of him.

Array, what are you doing?!

I DON'T KNOW!
I-I CAN'T STOP MY LEGS!

WHAT?!

They are moving on their own, G!
I can't stop running!
You gotta make it there before me!

(Dang it! So the temple DOES have other tricks up its sleeve.)

G tried catching up to Array but he was starting to get tired from all the running.

G! Throw something at me!

I won’t!

Why not?!

You might get hurt... or worse!
Can’t Teo try stopping you?

I-I’m not sure if he’s here with us right now!

Dang it!

Don’t worry about me, G.
You need this far more than me!

G rejected the idea. He wasn’t going to hurt his friend. He tried running as fast as he could but it wasn’t enough.

G, I’M ALMOST THERE!
PLEASE!

...

JUST DO IT!

G leaned down to grab a rock and threw it at Array’s leg which slowed him down immensely.

ACK!

Sorry!

N-no, keep going!
You are almost there!

No... NO MORE!

G gave it his all and reached the finish line just in time before Array did. The two looked at each with regret in their eyes. This didn't go how either of them planned. As the two started waving goodbye, another flash of light appeared as Array disappeared. G was bewildered. Where did Array go? Was he alright?!
He took a deep breath and tried thinking rationally. PotaTeo wasn't there with them while they were racing so perhaps Array got teleported back? Who knew at that point. All G could do now was hoping for the best and taking his prize.

G looked around the place and realized that he was now inside the temple itself. Weird, he thought to himself. It didn't look like they were inside the temple while they were racing each other. He didn't want to overthink these magical temples and looked around for the river. He saw one materializing right in front of his eyes. He slowly walked towards the river and thought about what he could wish for. He had to be specific with his wish… or did he? He could wish for something else as well.
His other self has been a constant problem for him ever since he touched that ancient text. He couldn't control it and it took over his body at the worst of times. So maybe… he could...

G remembered Array only putting his hand with the gauntlet inside the river to get the effects. So... was he supposed to do the same? Or was he supposed to throw himself into the river? It was hard to tell. G looked back one last time and jumped inside the river.

It was a horrible experience. G felt like he was suffocating, was this supposed to happen?! G tried getting out of the river but it was too late. It was like a black void trying to consume G as a whole. G could feel his body deteriorating in real time. He had to do something. So instead of rejecting the river, he stopped fighting back and closed his eyes. He thought about his final wish: “Give me the strength to defeat Maizie and my inner demon.” and accepted his fate.

Meanwhile, PotaTeo was drawing something on a piece of mud. Suddenly, Array appeared out of nowhere and landed next to PotaTeo.

W-what the?!
* looks around *
Where am I?!

Array saw PotaTeo hanging out all by himself.

Teo?!
Thank goodness you are okay!
* looks around some more *
Where is G?!

PotaTeo pointed at the temple.

Oh...
You think he actually made it?

PotaTeo nodded and continued drawing again.

Okay, phew.
Man, you have no idea how horrible that was, Teo!
I was going to lose on purpose but then the temple took control of my legs and then we-
* holds his leg from getting hurt *
Ow!

PotaTeo looked at him in worry.

N-no worries, little one.
I will be fine.

PotaTeo shook his head and then jumped inside the backpack. Before Array could say something, PotaTeo jumped back with a bandage on his hands.

Woah!
Bravo, little dude!
PotaTeo quickly covered Array's bleeding spot with the bandage and then put the remaining bandage inside the backpack.

I really gotta thank you for this, Teo!
You really know your stuff!

PotaTeo gave him a thumbs up in return.

Where did you learn this from anyways?

PotaTeo stopped drawing for a second and showed Array the drawing he was working on. There were 3 figures on the drawing. But the one PotaTeo wanted Array to focus on was the taller figure with the baggy clothes.

Ooh, so your dad did?

PotaTeo nodded in sadness. Array could tell he was missing him.

Don't worry, little dude.
We will go back to meet with your dad after we are done here!

But as Array looked closer to the drawing, he realized that maybe that wasn't the reason he was upset. In the drawing, there were 3 figures. One taller figure and one small female figure as Array expected. But instead of a potato, there was a human boy standing in the middle of the two.

I-Is this supposed to be... you?

PotaTeo nodded in sadness once again. He looked like he was about to cry.

I'm... so sorry to hear that, Teo.
I'm sure your dad loves you just the way you are!
You don't have to be someone else for him to love you.
* sighs *
...believe me, I know.

PotaTeo jumped towards him in happiness and hugged him.

Aww... no problem little guy, don't mention it!
I'm always here to help!

Array was happy to see PotaTeo finally in better spirits. He hasn't been this happy since they met up with Array again. Afterwards, PotaTeo wanted to repay his friend for all he did. So he picked up another stick and started drawing something else on the mud. After a few minutes, PotaTeo lightly hit Array's shoulder.

Oh, what is it, Teo?
You want to show me something?

* nods *

Well, okay then!
Let’s see it!

He looked over to see the drawing and was stunned from embarrassment afterwards. It was a drawing of a heart with “ G + A ? ” written inside it. He looked at PotaTeo in shock.

H-how-

“How do you know?!”

Any sign of Xtress or the rebellion?

Nope.

Meanwhile, a crystal knight group was investigating the very same area where the temple was “temporarily” located.

Urgh… boring!

Can you two shut up already?!
We will report back in a few hours anyways!

Suddenly, the group overhear sounds of a high pitched voice (and very embarrassed, judging by his tone) coming from nearby. The crystal knights told each other to shush as they went to check what was up. A blonde kid and a... sentient potato(?) were discussing something about a person called G.

Well boys, who’s ready to have a potato as your ally?

W-wait!

What?!

Don’t you know?
G is one of the original MPC2 members!
He’s the one with Xtress’ powers!

Oooh, right!
Now I remember too!

Hm...
We should contact the queen before we do anything.

But we don’t have time to go back!

I wonder what’s up with the temple behind them...

We can use our phones to contact her..?

The network system has been broken since the queen took over Perdiah, you moron!

Hey, who are you calling a moron?!

SILENCE!
* keeps the group shut *
I know we can’t contact the queen right now so we will do the next best thing!
* everyone looked at him all confused *
We will kidnap the two and bring them over to the Crystal Kingdom just in case the queen has plans for them!

What about G?

Oh, him.
Hm... we can use these two as bait to lure him back to the Crystal Kingdom!
* chuckles *
After all...

“He would definitely come to save his boyfriend!”

Y-you know about this?

* nods *

S-since when?!

PotaTeo shrugs. It seemed like he wasn’t sure either.

D-did you tell G?!

* shakes his head *

Phew... alright.
* takes a deep breath of relief *
I was so scared for a second.

PotaTeo was confused about why Array wanted to keep it a secret.

You seem confused...
I... don't really blame you.
* sighs *
It's very complicated.
I just... I'm scared.
I know I love him but... what if G doesn't love me back?!
You know?

Even though PotaTeo wanted to help, he knew this situation was far more complicated than he imagined. So, he tried helping the best he could.

Maybe I could try talking to him about my feelings...
You think that's a good idea?

PotaTeo nods. He just wanted his friend to be happy.

* sniffs *
Thanks, little one.
I will... try to find the perfect opportunity to tell him about my feelings.
J-just promise me that you won't tell him, okay?

PotaTeo gives him a thumbs up.

Very well.
* looks at the temple again *
Now let’s-

Array suddenly notices a crystal laser coming out of nowhere.

WATCH OUT!

He quickly picks up PotaTeo to save him. He didn’t expect any Crystal Knights to find them here.

We are not afraid!
Show yourselves now!

As Array finishes his sentence, a group of crystal knights emerges from the forest behind them.

Surrender in the name of the Crystal Queen or get crystallized!

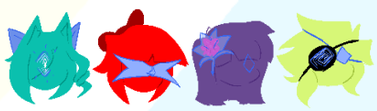
Nuh uh, no sire!
* puts PotaTeo in his backpack *
This is too dangerous for you, little one.
Just stay inside.

Who’s he talking to?

The potato obviously, you moron!

Hey!
I will tell the queen on you!

All of you, shut up!
Just get them!



Okay!

(Creepy…)

Array quickly dodges the laser and climbs on top of a nearby tree. He couldn't take all 5 of them at once and he surely wasn't going to risk PotaTeo's well-being. He jumped on top of a bunch of trees while throwing some stuff at the Crystal Knights along the way.

Stop jumping around and face us like a man!

* chuckles *
Have you ever heard of the game "Tag"?
Well, dem's the rules!
You will just have to catch me!

Array dodges another crystal blast.

Ooh, nice try, pointy!
You will definitely get me in your hundredth attempt!

GRRR!

PLAN B!
CRYSTALLIZE THE TREES!

Wait, huh-

Suddenly, Array felt as if the tree couldn't carry his weight. So he jumped to the next one but they were all getting crystallized one by one. He was running out of options.

Come on G... you can do this-

Array suddenly falls to the ground with his arms getting hit the hardest. He held his arms with tears in his eyes and looked at the grinning Crystal Knights coming towards him. This was the end. But before they could crystallize him, however, something strange happened. The crystals on the crystal knights' faces started... glowing red? They all held their crystal parts in pain and looked around to see who or what was causing this. It was hard to tell what it was with all the dust in the air. But before they knew it, they were met with a giant spinning hammer to the face!

The crystal knights had no idea what was going on. Where did that hammer even come from?! As the crystal knights looked around themselves with fear and confusion on their faces; the dust started to settle, revealing who this figure was all along.

It was G himself, looking at the crystal knights trying to hurt his friends. He was holding his trustworthy hammer once again. He was back to his previous glory! But he looked... different.

G-G?!

Ignore him, just crystallize these two first!

Before they could shoot, G appeared in front of them and blocked all the shots by spinning his hammer so fast that it reflected the shots

themselves. The crystal knights were getting worried.

We will not stop even if we die trying!

G was still silent. He called Array for help with his hand. As the two both hit the ground, with a hammer and gauntlet respectively, a small hole appeared on the ground. The two hit the ground again to push the crystal knight into the hole, causing them to fall in the process.

G took a few deep breaths afterwards. While Array was grateful, he was still worried for his lover.

G-G?
You okay?

I’m...
* quickly shakes his head *
Yeah, I’m fine.
What’s up dude?

G!

Array quickly went in for a hug. PotaTeo also jumped out of the backpack to join in.

I-I’m fine!

That’s great to hear!
* notices PotaTeo *
Hi to you too, Teo.
I’m sorry for all the trouble.

PotaTeo gave him a thumbs up. It seemed like things were getting better between the two.

I’m so glad you are okay!
* looks at him again *
What happened to you?!

What do you mean?

Well...
* points at G’s head *
You look... different.

Oh, really now?

Y-yeah?
You don’t have your headphones anymore!

...huh.
Come to think of it, you are right.
I think I left it inside the temple.
* touches his head *
And is this... more hair?

Sure seems like it!
* poses next to him *
Now it looks like we are matching... kinda!

* chuckles *

That works for me!
He he!
* notices Array’s damaged arms *
Are you alright?

Could be doing better.
* notices PotaTeo covering up the bleeding spots with bandages *
But I’m sure I will be fine soon.

That’s great to hear.

So, are we going back to you guys’ base now?
Since we are done here and all that?

Well, that was the original plan but uhm... I think I have a better idea!

Oh, what is it?

Hold on a second.
* looks at the hole *
I need to take care of this first.

G slowly walks towards the hole and sees the angry crystal knights trying to climb out of it.

I will let Artender know to get you guys from there whenever I get the chance.

We don’t need your help!

We only serve our queen.

Yeah, yeah, I heard that one before.

G went back to talk with Array and PotaTeo.

You know what, guys?
I think the Vengeful Rubies can take care of themselves for now.

Oh?

PotaTeo looked annoyed. He wasn't liking where this was going.

Now, now, hear me out.
If we go around Perdiah and help people out in the process, we could redirect them to the base!

Ooh!
And that way-

-we can build an army!

The two started laughing from just the thought of it all. Going on a small worldwide adventure while helping other folks seemed like a brilliant idea. PotaTeo still wasn't keen on the idea.

* looks at PotaTeo *
Don't worry little one.
Perhaps in one of those towns, we can find a radio to communicate with Artender and the others too!

Ooh, I like that!

After hearing about that, PotaTeo was now on board too! The admiration from his father after saving so many people would be awesome!

Well then.
Now that we are all pumped up... let’s start our new journey, shall we?

Heck yeah!
Where to first?

Well...
* pulls up the map *
Town Bloom is near!
Do you want to make a run for it?

You bet I do!

Before the two started running, G looked back at the temple one more time. Or more specifically, what he left behind. He remembered having a weird sort of attachment to his headphones when he first found it in a shop with Bushra and Sarpo. But now? He no longer had the desire to pick them up. And so, the trio went on a new quest to help their Vengeful Rubies friends!

But after a few hours have passed, something weird started happening inside the temple. Once the continent started floating again, the once fresh blue river started filling with squishy, black goo. As time passed, a mysterious figure made out of the same substance pulled the headphones back to the river again. The figure was now resting there, waiting to be unleashed.

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
GOT METAL IN YOUR THROAT?
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K

CHAPTER 32: GOT METAL IN YOUR THROAT?

It was a strange day on Planet Perdiah. Maizie was preparing a small army to take down the Vengeful Rubies once and for all! After learning of her plans, Sarpo knew he had to tell Cloe about it.

That night, Sarpo heard knocking sounds from the door in front of him. Cloe got here just in time, Sarpo thought to himself. The door slowly but surely opened to reveal...

Cloe, I’m so glad you are alright!

I’m happy to see you too, sweetie.

Did you turn off the cameras-

Sure did.
I’m not sure how much longer I can get away with this though.

The guards?

Both left their shift and are now waiting for the next ones to take over.

Phew, that’s good.
I was so worried.

Well... just be careful out there, okay?

Will do, hon.
* checks her pockets *
Is this the part you wanted?

Oh yes!
It’s perfect!
* looks at Cloe *
This is the last part I needed anyways so you won’t have to risk yourself after this.

I appreciate the concern sweetie but we are in this together!
I will blow my cover to save you if I have to!

You are the sweetest person I have ever met…

* blushes *
Thanks, hon...

Well, you can implant it on my robotic leg now.
* smiles *
This is it, we are at the tail end of our plan!

You are right, sweetheart!
* pulls out a screwdriver *
But what does this part do exactly?

It improves my agility!

...more specific?

...it increases the power of my flight boosters.

Ooh okay!

Cloe works on it for a few minutes and then stands up with a smile on her face.

All done!

Thanks sweetie.
* take a deep breath *
But I need to tell you something very important.

Oh?
* raises her eyebrow *
What is it?

This is really crucial.
So, Maizie showed up a day ago and showed me her latest creation.
A metallic version of me called Metal Sarpo!

W-what?!

How is that possible?

That’s not the end of it.
* sighs *
She’s sending an army led by him to destroy our friends’ base!
* reaches out his hand *
You have to warn them before it’s too late!

I-
* holds his hand *
I will try my best.

Thank you, Cloe.
We are ending this nightmare tomorrow!
Trust me!

I-I do!
It’s just... weird.

I know why you feel that way but trust me, it will all be okay.
* looks around *
Now, go!
Get back to your room before they find out!
Tell Artender of the coming army!
This is it!

I will!

And most importantly… never forget that I love you.

* looks back in embarrassment *
I-I love you too, hon.
See you tomorrow.

Cloe slowly closes the door and rushes to her room. She almost got spotted by one of the guards but made it out okay by walking in all 4s. (She wasn't really used to walking like that anymore.) Cloe quickly shut her door and took a deep breath. This constant back and forth of her bringing Sarpo spare parts was finally coming to a close. After this fiasco, they would finally go back to how things used to be. After catching her breath, she looked around the room for the radio. The sooner she told the others, the more they could prepare for the battle ahead! She found it in its usual spot and changed its frequency. Now was time for business!

On another side of the Crystal Kingdom, a crystal knight wanted to have a private discussion with their beloved queen.

Well, what did you need me for?
It's like 6 am in the morning, dude-
* coughs *
I-I mean, subordinate.

It's alright, my queen.
I just wanted to show you...
* shows her the camera system *
THIS!

(confused) What seems to be the problem here?

A few weeks ago, these two cameras went offline for a few minutes.
I originally thought it was just a system hiccup so I didn't mind it.
But it's been happening over and over again for the past few days.

Something fishy is going on here.

Are you sure this is deliberate?
I mean, maybe someone like...
* thinks *
I don’t know... Lydia broke the cameras while she was practicing?

It certainly isn’t the case, my queen.
They go offline at the most opportune times, something or someone is manually taking these cameras down.
* puts his hand on his chest *
Trust me, I used to be a security guard before I was crystallized.
I know faulty wiring when I see it.

This is... strange.
Which of the cameras go offline the most often?

The one next to and inside Sarpo’s cell.

...oh.

Yes, I believe there’s a traitor among us.

B-but the guards-

Said they saw nothing.
But I know those buffoons.
They always slack off and arrive at their shift much later than they are supposed to!

* looks back to Maizie *
So that’s why I think we should test every crystal knights’ loyalty to you, my queen.

We have to at this rate.
Do we have a lead of this supposed “traitor”?

As a matter of fact...
* types in a few words *
We do!

Maizie looked at the screen but was as confused as ever. A cat traveler was in all of the past camera footage. She couldn’t believe her eyes.

C-Cloe?!

Yes, one of the oldest members of MPC and Sarpo’s love interest.
From the recorded camera footage, I saw her going outside her room at very early hours.
Some might say, she was going outside to meet with “someone”.

Now...
* puts her hand on her chin *
This is odd.
Why didn’t she destroy that camera then?

We put a few extra cameras outside the knights’ rooms to check up on their well beings, since you didn’t want us to put cameras inside their rooms.

Well, yes!
It’s their privacy!

Maizie was still confused. This couldn’t be right.

But... Why would she do this?
Is she lovesick or something?!

Who knows, my queen.
The point is, she is the most likely candidate for breaking the cameras.

(Come to think of it, her crystallization has always been a mystery...)
* looks at the guard *
Well, I suppose we can start by interrogating her...

Good choice, my queen.
Have a good rest!

Thanks...

Maizie was really confused about all of this. Could Cloe or someone else really be... an inside agent? She decided to think about it later. She first had to oversee her army one last time before she let them take care of things. After that, she could actually worry about this supposed “traitor”. Only time would tell.

The very next day, Cloe woke up with a weird feeling in her stomach. Like something was about to go wrong at any second. Maybe it was the feeling of finality, Cloe thought. She heard sounds of cheering from the outside. She slowly walked towards her window and saw the

crowd cheering on for the army that was about to take down the Vengeful Rubies. Bushra seemed all excited about the praise while Unit SRP was dead silent, only focused on the mission at hand. Cloe could only hope her friends would be ready to face them. She went to check her wardrobe to change fits. When she was about to leave, there was a small note right under the door. She took it and read it out loud.

“Hi Cloe! I wanted to wake you up for the goodbye party since Bushra is your close friend. But then decided not to so you can rest well. By the way, we are inside the cafeteria as usual! See you there!

- Lydia”

Cloe sighs and giggles to herself. What a simple character Lydia was. Even after all the planning, she appreciated her simplicity. She wished she could actually help those two out after the smoke cleared but she knew it wasn’t the main priority at the moment. She had to wait for a signal from Sarpo first.

While she was on her way to the cafeteria, she saw a purple haired girl training all by herself in one of the camps outside from the window. It was Clara. Cloe looked at the hall leading towards the cafeteria and then looked back at Clara. Now that her job was almost done, she could at least fulfill her promise to Lydia and Terry. She decided to meet up with Clara before she met up with the other two.

Have to be better...
* keeps practicing on the dummy *
Have to be stronger… for her…

Uhm... hello?

Oh, hey there.
* stops practicing *
You were Ms. Meow, right?

Yup, Cloe Meow.

Nice to meet you, Cloe.
* sits down *
Want anything?

No, thank you.

* looks at Cloe *
So what brings you here?

Oh, I was just wandering around these parts.

Hm… I see.
* starts sharpening her sword *
I recognize you.
You are one of those MPC folks.

Well… used to be.

Yeah, yeah.
* looks at her reflection on the sword *
Heard people cheered for you guys when you came back from the mission.
* chuckles in pity *
Must be nice.

Woah, woah…

Cloe sits next to Clara.

I didn’t mean to hurt you!
Is everything alright?

Oh, how I wish that was the case.
* sighs *
Failure after failure gets tiring really fast.

You... you didn’t fail-

Oh, you sure I didn’t?!
* starts mumbling to herself *
I lost against a mad scientist and failed!
I tried taking care of the kingdom while my precious queen was gone but made a bigger mess!
And now, she doesn’t even look at me!
She’s so fixated on that dumb robot of hers!
What’s that thing going to do anyways?!

W-whoa.
Simmer down, girl.

* sighs *
S-sorry.
Too stressed out at the moment.

I understand your frustration, really, I do!
* thinks of something *
You wanna know what you can do?

(intrigued) Yeah?

You can destroy that robot with your own hands once it succeeds in its mission!

Uhm... that goes against our policy.
We can’t destroy what the queen values.
* gets suspicious and reaches out to her sword *
Where did you get those TREACHEROUS ideas?!

N-no, I didn’t mean it THAT way!

Then what?

I just simply wanted you to feel happy, that’s all!

...oh.
* puts away her sword *
Sorry.

I-It’s fine?

Hm... so you don’t really like that robot either, huh?

Nope!
It’s a fully robotic version of a... loved one so it’s very bizarre looking.

Oh yeah, I forgot you two had that going on.

Pardon?

* chuckles *
You know what I mean.

H-hey!
* blushes *
Don’t go around saying stuff like that so casually!

* giggles *
If you say so.

The two laugh it off. It was a nice change of pace, Clara thought.

Well...
* stands up *
Thanks for the talk, Ms. Meow.
Wish we could have talked more but I have my knightly duties.

Don’t sweat it, Clara!
Anytime!

I appreciated your company a lot.

Same thoughts.
* suddenly remembers something *
W-wait, before you go-

Eh?

Your teammates... Terry and Lydia.
They want to talk with you again.
They missed you a whole lot.

…oh.
* turns her back to Cloe *
How do you know about them?

I became friends with the two not too long ago.
And they wanted me to tell you this.
* also stands up *
Please, talk to them again.
They don’t hold any grudges against you.
They just want you back.

Hm… thanks.
* smiles *

I will talk to them... eventually.

The two shook hands as they both left the camping area. Cloe was happy that she fulfilled her promise to Terry and Lydia. She wasn't sure if Clara would apologize to them before or after this whole thing was over but she was glad that she got Clara to listen. Now, she could meet with her friends again.

She went to the cafeteria and saw Terry and Lydia waiting for her. Little did they know that was the last time they would ever share a friendly banter.

Ayy, there she is!

Really?
* looks around and sees Cloe *
Hiiiii Cloe!
* waves her hand *
Over here!

Cloe chuckled and sat next to them.

Hi to you guys too.

Yeee!
So, what have you been up to?

(sarcasm) Eh, more or less the same.

(confused) You sure?
It doesn't sound like it.

Yeah, I’m sure.

Did you hear about the rumors of the queen feeling sick?
The poor gal.
I hope she will be alright!
* stands up and starts flailing her arms *
That dastardly sorcerer caused this, I just know it!

You can just say his name, you know?

I WON’T GIVE HIM THE PLEASURE!

Woah woah...
* puts her hand on Lydia’s back *
Calm down Lydia, it’s fine.

It isn’t... but okay.
* crosses her arms *
Hmpf.

As she was saying, yeah the queen isn’t doing super hot right now but I’m sure the medics will help her.

I see...

Suddenly, they see a crystal knight with glasses walking towards them. He started pointing at Cloe which made her worried.

You there!
The queen calls you to her throne room.
* looks at her with disgust *
Don’t be late.

What’s that all about?

Yeah, why would the queen want to see you?

(scared) I-Its fine, guys.
I will just talk to the queen and be right back.

Well then, see you around Cloe.

Yay, see you later bestie!

Cloe was starting to feel guilty. She couldn’t say goodbye to these people out of good will... not when she was about to betray all of them very soon.

I wonder what their deal is...
Oh well... I will just continue trying to solve this.
* trying to solve a rubik’s cube *
Ugh, this is so hard!

(tired) Gah, gimme that.
* picks it up and solves it in less than a minute *

There.

Woah... you are very smart, big guy!

Yeah, yeah.

Terry was still looking at the hall Cloe left from. He had a feeling that something weird was about to happen. Terry decided on what he was going to do. While trying to give Lydia back the rubik's cube, he accidentally applied too much force and hit her with it.

* holding her chest *
Ouchie...

You stay here for a second.
I will be back!

Aww...
* makes a sad face *
Where are you going?

I'm going to see what's up with Cloe and the queen.

Why, though?
I'm sure Cloe will explain everything once she's back.

Perhaps...

“But something about this... doesn’t feel right.”

Meanwhile; back at the Vengeful Rubies’ base of operations, things were going well. For the last few days, they have grown much in numbers with more and more of them learning how to fight thanks to Hood. They also got a bunch more prisoners locked up in the cells. While Artender was still worried for his boy, he knew he had to focus on the mission at hand (as well as taking care of his daughter.) He was waiting in the meeting room for Hood to arrive.

Cloe told them about an army led by Bushra and a robotic Sarpo called Metal Sarpo. Artender really didn’t like the naming scheme at all. He thought they wouldn’t be seen but in the off chance they do get found, they needed a plan. That’s what this meeting was suppose to be for. Artender was getting real tired of waiting until he heard knocking sounds coming from outside.

There you are, Hood!
I was wondering what you were up to.

Save it, pumpkin.
I was too busy dealing with your twerp.

Don’t talk to Emily that way.

Whatever.
You got the map?

Yeah?

Artender gives Hood the map and waits for Hood to give him something they all needed. But as time went on, he didn’t get any answers from her so Artender couldn’t help but just outright ask.

Before we start, did you prepare the backup plan?

Oh, that?
* mocks with her tongue *
Pfft, nah.
I figured we would focus our attention on these instead!

Are you kidding me?!
I told you to make a backup plan in case Metal Sarpo or other crystal knights found us!

Pfft... relax, pumpkin!
We have been here for a while now and not a single crystal knight group managed to find us!
* chuckles *
I wouldn’t worry about that.

You DO know that it’s still a possibility, right?
You can’t act this reckless!

Yeah yeah, I know.
* stretches her hands *
I guess we can talk about that after we are done with this, you big baby!

Sigh... works for me.

Artender leans back to his chair and picks up a map from his backpack. But this wasn’t any ordinary map. It was a map of the Crystal Kingdom itself.

So from all the intel we got from Cloe, the Crystal Kingdom should roughly have a layout like this!

Hm... fascinating.

We could try the sneaky approach...

With the giant crystal wall surrounding the whole place?
Not to mention all the crystal knights around it?
No, sire!
* points at the point blank entrance *
We have to overpower that brat and her army.

Well, we don’t have enough people for that!
And even if we did, Maizie can turn them into crystal knights to turn the tides of the battle!

Then, we will try a mix of both strategies!

Better than nothing, I suppose.

The two shook hands while still not trusting each other. Even though they led the group of survivors together for days now, they still didn’t like one another.

Now that we got that out of the way... how are the temple quests going?

We sent a few groups to secure the temples but so far, none of the groups have responded back!
So that means...

* sighs *
Yeah... yeah, I know.
* tries to be hopeful *
Once G comes back, I’m sure he will help us reach those temples!

How are you so sure he isn’t a Crystal Knight right now?

Because...

He’s G?

...yeah.

Not very reassuring now, is it?

I want to think more positively about this, thank you very much.

Hmpf...

As for the final topic... we gotta have some sort of backup plan in case the army finds this place-

Like I said, just relax pumpkin.
I’m sure we will be just fine-

Umm... sorry to interrupt but you might need to see this, generals!

...eh?

What is it, Midori?
What happened?

...please follow after me.

The two follow after the girl soldier with a bowtie. She reminded Artender of Emily a lot, actually. She pointed at the ladders leading above.

So, what’s the big idea?

The guards above reported that they saw Bushra and Metal Sarpo around the area!

Where are the guards now?

They used the slide to get inside, they are safe now.

That’s good.

Well, can’t we just wait it out?
I mean, phooey, I’m sure they won’t think to look under a stump!

...as I was going to say, Metal Sarpo has scanners in his eyes from what the guards told us.
They are investigating underground as well!

Artender angrily looks at Hood.

...crud.

Hello there, Ms. Meow.
I have been waiting for you.

* bows *
Hello there, my queen!

You can skip the formalities for now, Cloe.
I need to ask a favor of you.

Oh?
Of course, my queen.

Maizie gets up from her throne and tells Cloe to follow behind her.
Cloe could notice Maizie sometimes holding her heart while walking,

it seems that the rumors were right. She was sick after all! While Cloe was trying to act normal, she was getting worried the closer they got to their destination. Sarpo's prison room. Maizie knocked on the door as always and entered the room with Cloe by her side. Cloe was struggling to act cool.

You know, Cloe?
Since I built Unit SRP-

Who?

(confused) You know the Sarpo-bot?

Ooh okay, sorry.
Carry on.

Ehem.
As I was saying, since I built Unit SRP, I don't really need to keep Sarpo as my prisoner anymore!
* lightly spins around her staff *
You might be thinking "Why don't you just crystallize him?".
Well, I don't think it's really "fun" that way, you know?
Why would I have the need for two Sarpo-s when one of them is inferior to the other in almost every way?
Makes you think, doesn't it?

I-I-

So, here's your task for the day!

Before Cloe could process what she meant, Maizie handed her a sword. A fresh, untouched one at that.

I want you to kill Sarpo.
He's vital to this kingdom and myself!
I know you would rather have him crystallized but this is for the greater good of the kingdom.

Cloe was out of words. She couldn't believe what was happening. She looked at Sarpo, he seemed just as worried as she was. S-she couldn't kill the love of her life. She wouldn't have been able to live with herself otherwise.

* sighs *
I'm going back to my throne room.
Report back once you are done with his execution.
My top men will be watching the entire thing on the cameras, Cloe.
* puts her hands on Cloe's shoulders *
Believe me, I didn't want to do this either.
But I need to make sure of your loyalty to the cause.

Cloe wasn't paying attention to what Maizie was saying. Everything was moving so fast. She couldn't process all of it.

And please…
"Don't fail me."

So uh, when do we fight these bozos?

Shhh… quiet!

The Vengeful Rubies leaders (+ Midori) were watching the army from inside the bushes. They were fully hidden there. Midori was wearing a war general hat while the two still kept their regular

clothing. Hood told her it was a bit too grandiose but Midori wanted to keep it.

They haven’t noticed the the stump yet so if we are lucky, they could just ignore it-

Sssh!
They are coming this way.

(Darn it.)

The three waited until the Crystal Knights did something drastic. In the very tail end of the army, they saw Bushra making jokes to Unit SRP.

So then I told Sarpo “You should eat your green beans!” then he was like “I’m allergic to those!”, which then I responded with “Excuses, excuses!”.
* looks at the army *
Wasn’t that funny, gang?

I guess it was a bit funny...

I can see the funny part but the delivery could have been better...

I dunno, I liked it.

Peh, everyone’s a critic these days.
* lightly hits Unit SRP *
What do you think, robotic version of my friend?

[LOGGING THIS UNDER: AMETURE AND UNFUNNY.]
[BUSHRA STOKED SHOULD STOP MAKING JOKES TILL THE END OF TIME.]

Every crystal knight started laughing at Bushra which made him really upset.

Hey now!
That’s not cool, guys!

[STOP INTERFERING.]
* presses the button next to his shades *
[AREA ANALYZING: NOTHING WORTH OF VALUE SO FAR.]

* looks at the crystal knights *
You guys see what I’m talking about?
This rusty bucket of bolts ain’t worth squat!

Um...
* points behind
Are you sure about that?

Huh-

[POPULATION OF 200 PEOPLE SPOTTED UNDER THIS PLANE.]
[UNDERGROUND BASE IS CONNECTED TO THE SLIDE UNDER THIS STUMP.]
[DESTRUCTION ADVISED.]

!?@#

Now’s our cue to move in!

YEAH!

The three of them jumped out of the bushes and readied themselves for a fight. The crystal knights all pointed their crystal guns to the three. They were waiting for Bushra and Unit SRP’s orders. Bushra looks at them in shock.

ARTENDER?!
HOOD?!
SOME GIRL I DON’T KNOW?!

Hi Bushra.
* sighs *
Didn’t expect to meet you like this.

Yeah, you bet!

You guys are working together?!

Um... kinda?

Eh... comes with the job.

Um... sir? Should we shoot in for the kill?

Nuh uh!

B-but they are standing there!

I know, I know!
But I will try to talk to them!

[THIS IS NOT PART OF THE MISSION.]
[WE ARE SUPPOSED TO ELIMINATE: THE RESISTANCE.]
[THEY ARE TARGETS.]

Oh, shut it, tin can!
Just give me a few minutes!

Bushra slowly walks towards the three while holding up two fingers, essentially making a peace sign with his hand.

Look Artender, I know you probably don’t trust me but please listen to what I say!

Hm...

No, just take down their leader while you have the chance!
* Artender lightly hits her *
ACK!

Can you shut her off, Midori?

Gladly, sir.

Who are you to tell me to shut up?!
I LITERALLY RESURRECTED XTRESS, ME!
I'M THE REASON YOU ARE HERE, YOU B-

Artender tries to ignore Hood's shouting behind them and continues looking at Bushra's eyes. His once joyful eyes were turned into lifeless, deadpan ones.

How am I supposed to know this isn't a trick, Bushra?

Oh, believe me!
I would have thought the same thing!
That's why I told those guys to stand down.

…what are you trying to do here?

I... just want the gang back together!

I mean, wouldn’t it be great if we were all together again?

Once we defeat Maizie, we can be together too!
* takes a step towards Bushra *
It doesn’t have to be HER way!

B-but dude, I spent so much time there!
It’s actually not that bad once you get used to it!

Maizie uses her magic to brainwash all of you to praise her!
It’s not a genuine feeling!

Oh but you will team up with Hood instead, huh?!

I-

And you don’t trust your old pal, Bushra?
Isn’t that hypocritical?!

Bushra...
* bites his lips *
It isn’t like that...

[WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE.]
[JUST FINISH IT ALREADY!]

N-no, I still need to get through to him!

I know he will listen!

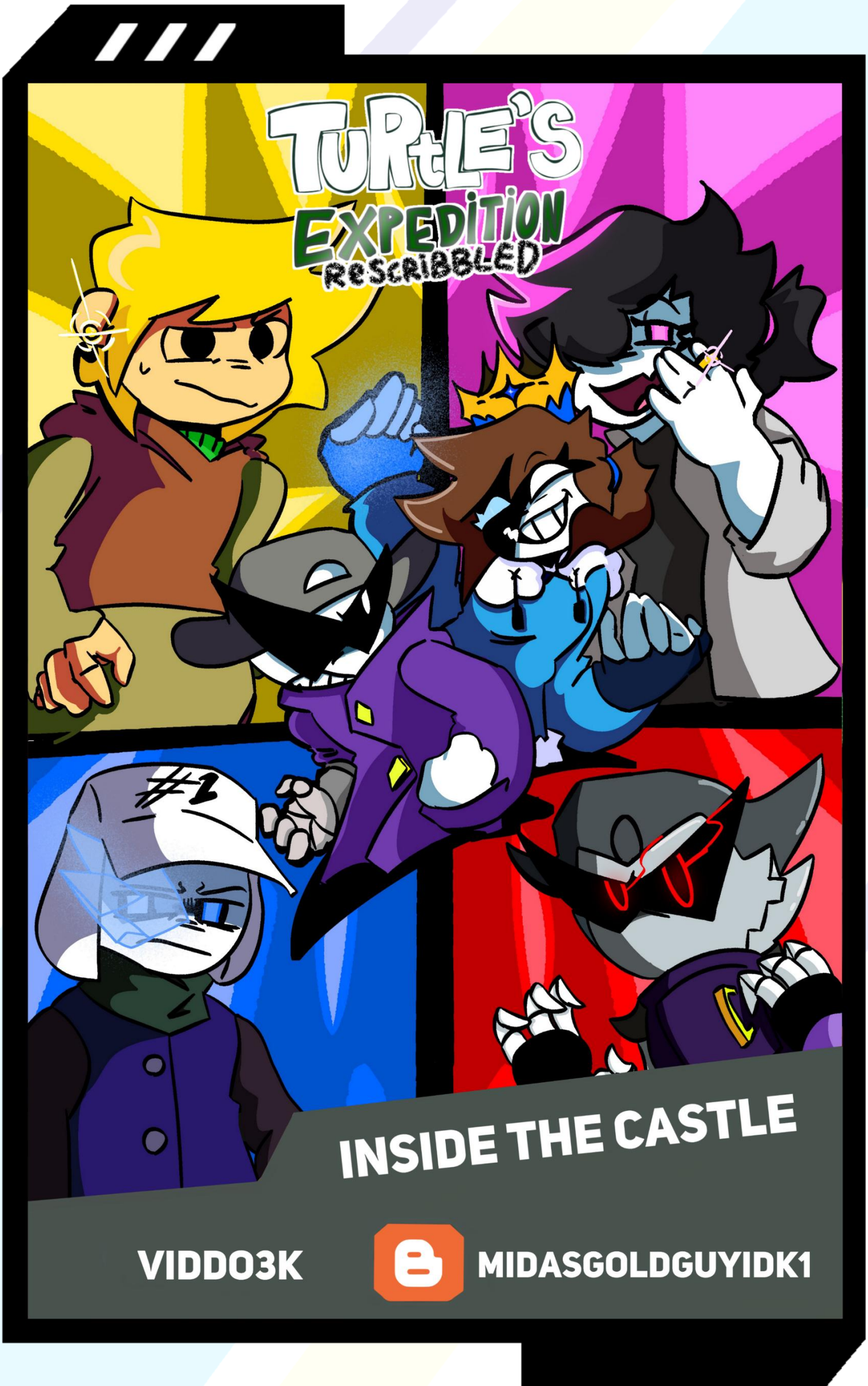
Before Bushra could do anything, Unit SRP forcibly grabs his hand as Bushra looks at him in shock.

[THAT WASN’T A REQUEST.]
[THAT WAS AN ORDER.]

Unit SRP flings Bushra to the air and throws him towards the nearest tree, knocking him unconscious. Everyone, including the Crystal Knights, were shocked. Artender knew this wasn’t going to end well.

[PRIORITY 1: KILL THE RESISTANCE’S LEADERS!]
[AND CRYSTALLIZE THE REST!]

“[SHOW THEM NO MERCY!]”


TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
#1
INSIDE THE CASTLE
VIDDO3K
MIDASGOLDGUYIDK1

CHAPTER 33: INSIDE THE CASTLE

Today was a monumental day for Perdiah, today was the day all of the Queen's plans would bear fruit. Even with some (not so) minor hiccups, Maizie hoped that all of her hard work would finally pay off… It had to, right?
While Maizie was awaiting for good news, Cloe was off to Sarpo's cell. To “get rid of him for good”, as the Queen put it. But Cloe knew she couldn’t do that. And she couldn’t continue playing along when Sarpo’s life was on the line either. It was now.

So, she had a different plan in mind. Or rather... a modified version of Sarpo’s initial plan. After walking for a while, she arrived at the location and looked at the door in front of her. It was finally time to let her love free, in more ways than one. She took a deep breath, before knocking on the door and entering the room…

Cloe, honey, you are back!
* smiles *
How’s my sweetie doing?

…

Cloe?
* raises his eyebrow *
Hey, what's with that look?

Cloe quietly turned her back and closed the door. She didn’t want anyone to overhear them. She took out the sword Maizie gave to her and showed it to Sarpo.

W-what is this?

Maizie ordered me to… kill you.

H-HUH?!

C-Calm down.
Don’t worry, I have no intentions of hurting you, my love.
* throws the sword away *
I just wanted to show you how dire our situation is.

I- I see…
* gulps *
So what do you have in mind?

Well, I can’t play along with the system anymore because if they notice you still being alive, they will definitely know something’s up!

So…?

* holds Sarpo’s robotic arm for comfort *
You remember that plan where you said you would fight against Maizie one on one?

Ooh, right!

Yeah. Well...
* stands up *
I want in on the plan.

But Cloe-

Don’t “Cloe” me!
We started this together and we will end it together, okay?!

…

I won’t let you get hurt again.
* points at him *
Understood?

Yeah, understood.

Cloe picked up the sword and began to undo Sarpo's chains, finally setting him free once again. But before he could thank her, he felt soothing comfort on his lips. It was like living in a dream.

C-Cloe… I don’t know what to say-

Cloe put her hand on his lips to shut him up.

Shush you.
* smiles *
Promise to stay safe for... us, okay?

I-I will.
* blushes *
Don't worry, I know what I'm doing.

* backs away *
You better, because if you die, I'll kill you!

Laughing
Oh my, isn't that a bit much?

Oh hush, I've said worse, haven't I?

Haha, sure…
(No, not really.)

And then the two love birds hugged each other… How long has it been since they've hugged? It didn't matter now, they held onto one another for a little longer, before they both sat up, ready to leave.

Now go!
I will follow right behind you!

And so, the two parted ways. Cloe wished him good luck, with more tears in her eyes, not knowing if she would see him again… Part of her wished she could help him fight alongside Maizie but... no. She shook her head and looked from the cell's window. She had a different role to play in this plan and she was determined to keep Sarpo safe.

In the meantime, the Queen was feeling restless, wanting to hear the good news she had been desperately waiting for so long. Surely, her plan had to have worked! Either, the 'Vengeful Rubies' were completely caught off guard, or simply overwhelmed by UNIT SRP and the fisher boy! Of course! Maizie thought it was impossible for a bunch of unorganised rebels to come up with a defence good enough for her flawless plan!

She waited and waited... until she suddenly started hearing the sound of some boosters. She smiled. Finally, the good news had arrived! She turned around, expecting to find UNIT SRP. But something wasn't right. She was confused on why he was using his boosters to rush to her room? But as soon as she saw who it really was, however, her heart dropped.
She casted a spell and quickly raised a wall of crystals to her side, blocking the attack by the nick of time…

WHAT?! HOW!?

You didn't expect me to be a sitting duck this whole time, did you?

Maizie was shocked beyond belief. What was he doing here?! She had so many questions in her head. But nothing could match the sheer confusion she felt as she noticed the upgrades on Sarpo's cybernetics.

Impossible... Those body parts… They're SRP's!
How on Perdiah did you get them!? And...
* points at him *
Just how'd you escape!?

Shrugs
Meh, that's a secret.
* cracks his knuckles *
I can always tell you after I mop the floor with your face!

…Heh, pathetic.
* smiles *
Just who do you think you are?!
You are a fool to face me alone!
You are in MY domain, Mr. Fields!

Sooner or later, my crystal knights will arrive here and destroy you once and for all!

Are you sure about that?
* glares behind him *
Check again.

MPC2’s leader points at the room's door with a cocky smirk… the door... it was crystalized! They were both trapped in there, both her and Sarpo!

Maizie knew she had no other choice but to fight against Sarpo, one on one. They both readied themselves for a fight. She didn't find him too threatening by himself, but she knew she had to be careful, especially after… last time. Sarpo, on the other hand, was nervous beyond belief, a ‘fair’ one on one with this lunatic from across the room was extremely dangerous, and he could no longer use shock to his advantage either, since she knew what these upgrades had in store.

While Sarpo and Maizie started their fight to the death, Cloe was trying to hide from the other crystal knights. She threw the crystallizers she used away so it couldn’t be used as evidence against her. If they saw her in front of the crystallized door, surely they would start asking questions! Unfortunately for her, however, she wouldn’t be so lucky as a handful of Knights spotted her…

Uh... what are you doing here?

Since when did we have a cat in our team?

She's not, stupid, she locked the Queen in the throne room!

Wait, what!?

Suddenly, Cloe heard a familiar voice from behind the trio of crystal knights and froze up in place. She knew who this was.

Cloe?!
* slowly walks towards her with shock *
W-why?!

Terry, I-I can explain –

Terry grabbed the two Knights by their clothes, then tossed them at Cloe, whom they landed on top of. He made his way to her, while the two Knights held her still… Just what was going on here?! Did he miss something? No, she had to have crystallized the throne room's door, who else could have done it?! Something was clearly wrong. He couldn't be bothered to think of a plan, so he decided to literally knock some sense into her; he slapped her so hard that… Her crystal helmet came off!?

* holding her head *
… Ugh.

Cloe looked around and saw her helmet on the ground. She started to panic at the spot.

O-oh dear-

Miss Cloe!?
What is this!?

Before the boy could get an answer, Cloe knocked away the Knights that were holding her and tried making a run for it. But she felt someone holding her by the arm, not allowing her to go. She looked back and saw Terry's confused face.

Miss Meow, please!
I just want some answers!

…I’m sorry, Terry.

Before he knew it, Cloe took off the glove on her other hand and quickly swiped at Terry’s arm.

OW!

Terry stumbled back with blood coming out of his arm. Cloe looked at Terry with regret in her eyes and continued running away. But when she could get to the canteen area, a few crystal knights jumped on top of her, trying to hold her in place.

Nothing made sense, what was even happening!? Did she betray them!? Everyone in the canteen area was looking at the chaos that was ensuing in the area. One of the two Knights took out his Crystalizer Gun and walked up to the unconscious woman, before Terry stopped them.

No no, stop!
* coughs *
We have to get to the bottom of this first!

What are you trying to say?
* points the crystallizer at Terry *
Are you working with her?!

What?! No, no! I was just saying...
We should wait for our Queen to make a judgement.

Hm...

Yeah, she'll absolutely be on our heads if she finds out we did this!

Hm… sounds good to me.
* puts his crystallizer gun away *
Sorry for the outburst, sir.

Y-you are pardoned?

* looks at Terry's arms *
Sir, you are bleeding!
We should get you health care.

* smiles *
That would be much appreciated.

The two guards picked Terry by the shoulders as they left the canteen area.

Like I said, we shouldn't act without being ordered to do so.
If she gets mad…
Sigh
I'll take full responsibility.

… Sir, I think you're nuts–

Annoyed Oh my GOSH!

As the fight between Sarpo and Maizie continued, there was another battle happening on the other side of Perdiah. The Vengeful Rubies continued their struggle against the team of Crystal Knights.

Unit SRP especially was tough to deal with. After knocking off Bushra, he was leading the whole army by himself and he was doing a fantastic job at it. Artender and Hood were managing themselves against the crowd of soldiers, while slipping away from all of the robot's attacks. The former tyrant was showing some impressive fist fighting skills, while the blonde held back some knights with a sword.

So, you're not all talk after all!
* pushes away a Crystal Knight*
Eh, Hood!?

* knocks a Knight away*
Tch, whatever you say, single father!
You're not too bad yourself!

The unlikely duo stared at each other, before they scoff and look away. They had more important matters to take care of.

Unit SRP was able to get in a few lucky hits on the odd couple, with Hood being seemingly more annoyed than hurt.

Urgh, what a cluster of junk!
I will make sure to build a million of these!
* dodges a laser attack *
So you'll have to deal with them!

Maybe you wouldn't have to-
* pushes Unit SRP away with his word *

If you never started this mess!

I don't need your lectures!

Someone has to put you in your place!

Some of the Knights stopped fighting the two, wanting to see where their interaction would end up. It was like watching a romance drama. Some of the other Knights yell at them to get to work as they were losing some ground, because of the two distracting them.

As they continued the fight, most of the people who were hiding away came out to help, trying to hold off the Knights best they could, specifically aiming to destroy their blasters. Unfortunately, some survivors were hit by stray blasts, causing them to join the other side mid battle. Not to mention, the mental fatigue was starting to make itself known.

Of course, little Emily couldn't just sit back and watch, not when her father was out there risking his life for everyone! She got out of her hiding spot to see what was going on, only to find Bushra unconscious, lying on a tree.

Mr. Stoked?
* shakes her head *
Is that you?!

Emily was confused but also happy to see Bushra again. She quickly jumped out of the log and went next to Bushra.

Mr. Stoked?
* shakes him *
Mr. Stoked, are you alright?
It’s me, Emily!

She tried to wake the fisherman, but to no avail.

Oh dear, he must be taking a nap.
* looks over to Robert *
What should we do, Robert?

No response came from Robert, as usual.

You are right!
* quickly looks around *
It’s not safe around here!
Mr. Stoked will get hurt if we don’t do something!

So, Emily decided to drag him into the hideout, even if she struggled to do so. Is he this heavy because he eats so much fish, Emily thought to herself while still dragging him towards the slide. After a minute had passed, the two finally reached the underground base where both would be safe. But Emily knew her job was far from over. Other kind people were upstairs, fighting to keep her and children like her safe. So, she climbed up the stairs to help more people. Dad will be so proud, Emily thought to herself with a big smile on her face.

However, Unit SRP noticed the child dragging Bushra into the fake tree stump earlier. Even if he particularly didn’t care about Bushra, he had to keep him out of harm’s way due to the Queen’s order. So, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

Back at the Kingdom, the fight between Sarpo and Maizie continued.

As much as Maizie hated to think about it... she was stressed, no, scared! She didn’t want to go out like this, she just couldn’t! Maizie focused on using the staff to manipulate the Crystals, moving them towards the MPC2 leader and keeping him from getting too close with a sword swipe, one which she took from her trusty yet unreliable biggest adorer. Every attack she threw out was meant to put an end to his life. She wanted him gone this instant!

But Sarpo's offence was relentless, he slipped through some of her trickier attacks and answered them with his own. It seemed like he

had the advantage over her... until she managed to finally land a hit on him. And it was a great hit too, as a pillar of Crystals hit him right in the stomach, knocking him into a wall.

UGH!

You filthy rat!
How on Perdiah did you get your hands on my technology, huh!? * points at herself *
It’s MY tech, MINE!

* trying to catch his breath *
Stop crying like a child… I'm not telling you anything.

A child?!
* casts another spell onto Sarpo *
Don't You Understand!?
All Of My Hard Work, Gone Down The DRAIN!!
YOU AND YOUR STUPID GROUP OF INSIGNIFICANT BUGS ARE RUINING MY PLANS!!

Maizie continued to attack the cyborg as she started to tear up, her moves getting sloppier as time went on. She kept screaming at Sarpo for always getting in her way.

Why… WHY DO YOU KEEP DOING THIS TO ME!?
CAN’T I JUST BE HAPPY TOO?!
I JUST WANT TO SEE MY LOVED ONE AGAIN!!

Maizie...

YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND!
THEIR LIFE WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ME UNFAIRLY!
I WANTED A FUTURE WITH THEM BUT NOW...

They're gone, I know.
* sighs *
Maizie, I know it is hard to accept but... this isn’t the way to go about it–

SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!!
* casts another spell *
YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH!! WHY ME!?
I WANT THEM BACK!!

What are you talking about?!
I don't know what you're going through at all!
This is much different!

THEN I'LL MAKE YOU KNOW!!
* holds her face *
REE HEE!!!
I'LL MAKE YOU SUFFER JUST LIKE I DID!!

Now she's just rambling, Sarpo thought to himself. Either, the power was consuming her, or she was going insane from her feelings. Either way, he had to stop this here and now. She was beyond salvation at this point. All Sarpo had to do now was enduring her onslaught and trying to successfully knock her out, hopefully without needing to kill her.

Back at the remains of Town Mercia; The Vengeful Rubies had the upper hand, most of the Knights were being dealt with, while Unit

SRP was starting to falter. Artender was unsure whether that was a cheap copy of his buddy or if it was the real him with a different coat of paint, or, well, steel. Nevertheless, it was on the backfoot for a while now, so taking it out should have been easy.

Huff puff...

What's the problem, pumpkin?
* chuckles *
Tired?

Yeah, what of it?!
Aren't you tired yourself?

…

Yeah, that's what I thought!

Artender looks over to the battlefield to see what the survivors were up to. Some were tying up the crystal knights while some were still fighting the free crystal knights.

How's the people, Midori?

We are overall in good shape, sir.

That's good.
* tries to catch his breath *
Any major losses?

We… ended up losing a few people in the battle but we got their weapons and tied them up as well.

I see.
* looks back at Unit SRP *
Well, look how the turns have tabled!
We have won, you hunk of junk!

…you messed up the wording on that.

* ignores her *
Just accept defeat and tell us everything you know about Maizie in your… data or whatever.

[WON'T… LOSE….]

* punches Artender on the shoulder *
Stop toying with it and just destroy it already!
You sadist!

Says you!

That was, until the dastardly robot decided to divert its attention to... somewhere else.

What's it doing now?

Gah, who cares?!

Just slice its head off!

Suddenly, the robot used the remaining power left in his boosters as he marched towards the defenceless child as she was helping people get inside the hideout.

EEK!
* covers her face *
GO AWAY!

And in one fell swoop, Unit SRP snatched Emily away and started flying away while carrying Emily!

DAD!!!!

Well, crap baskets! It's flying away!

EMILY!!! NO!!!

Artender looks around in panic and tears in his eye. His daughter was kidnapped in front of him with nothing he could do to stop it.

Anyone… someone… PLEASE!
SHOOT THAT THING DOWN!
IT SNATCHED MY DAUGHTER AWAY!

I got it!

Suddenly, Artender heard this strange voice out of nowhere. He was confused to say the least. He heard the sounds of a bell chiming as a handful of daggers hit the robot on its head, causing it to lose its balance. The robot looked around itself, confused. Impossible, he didn’t detect any being with wings in the base. Before the faker

could escape, a bird-like figure kicks it right into a chasm below them. And hit it with more daggers for good measure. But as the robot fell, so did Emily.

EEK! HELP!

But thankfully, the bird figure grabbed her mid air as the two landed safely to the ground. Emily was confused, relieved and most importantly, scared. She looked around for her dad and ran towards him in an instant. Hood and Artender couldn’t believe what they were seeing. The two saw a bird Traveler standing in front of a tribe of Travelers, all with different species. The Traveler took a few steps forward and showed off her daggers underneath her wings.

W-who are you?!

My name is Henna.
The daughter of Hawk.

WHY WONT YOU DIE?!

As the fight between the Queen and the cyborg raged on, Sarpo started to feel more and more bad about Maizie. She was having a mental breakdown in the battlefield, after all. He managed to get a lucky hit in and sent Maizie flying a powerful kick.

And there she was, laying on the floor as she started to cry. She screamed at Sarpo, hurling insults at him, finding any excuse she could. Sarpo couldn't help but think… She's not the psychopath he saw her as initially. She was hurt, the loss of her partner destroyed her morale, she let her newfound power get to her head, she let that power manipulate her.

He knew what to do.

Sarpo raised his hands up in the sky, then lends one to the girl, reaching for hers.

Get up, Maizie.

… What…?

Come on! Is this what you really want?
Conquering lands? Brainwashing innocent lives?
Would THEY have wanted this?

…

Really, I don’t think you are a bad person at your core.
You are just… hurt and misguided.
And frankly... that’s okay.
* smiles *
Wounds are meant to heal.

... Are you being honest?

Yeah!

… not trying to trick me?

Of course not!
Why would I do that?!

…

Come on!
* reaches out his hand again *
I can help you start over, even if it’s difficult.

Maizie looked at him, she couldn’t believe her eyes. Was he… forgiving her? No, he wasn't, but he was offering her a chance, a chance to try again... Deep down, she really wanted this madness to stop. Perhaps if she did accept his offering, she could rebuild her life and go back to simpler days!... But that would mean she'd have to give up on her current objective… Right, her true goal, Kyle. The love of her life. Their precious smile... she would give anything to see them again. She slapped Sarpo's hand away, and stabbed him with the sword before he could even react.

ACK!
* holding his chest *
W-why?

What a load of crap!
I don't care! I don't need to try again!
* chuckles *
THIS is what I want, THIS is what THEY want!
You don't know anything about US!

She plunges her sword deeper into his body, the floor below him tainted in his blood. Sarpo’s sight was starting to blur, he wasn’t going to make it if he didn’t do anything. He managed to push Maizie away with a quick swipe, finally taking the sword out of his chest. He tried walking towards her while holding his chest, trying not to spill unnecessary blood, but it was hurting too much. The wound hurt, but her denial did so even more.

Of course, he was expecting some resistance, but this was beyond his imagination, he didn't expect... this.

Maizie started to laugh maniacally, with her staff ready to Crystalize him…

I could just end you right now, you know?
* chuckles *
Or, better yet, you can be proof of what happens when anyone challenges me!

* coughs *
W-whatever do you mean...

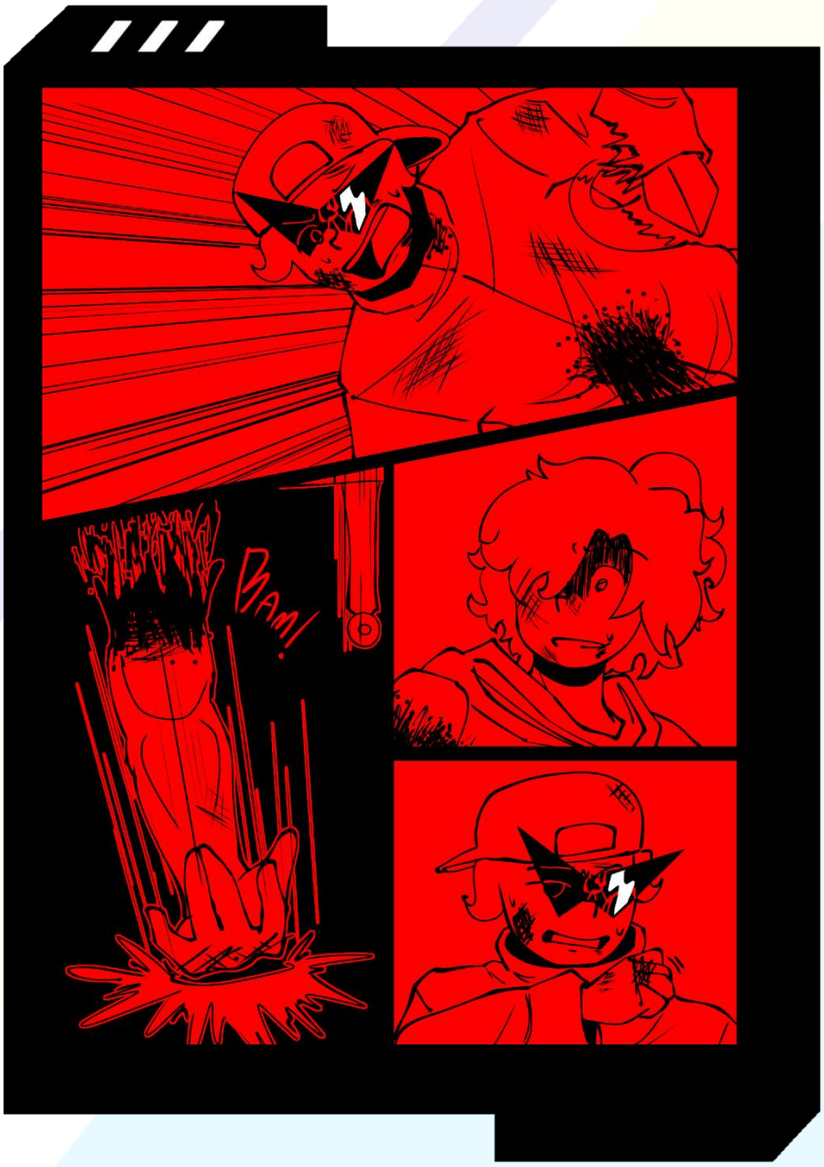
I will end your puny life, of course!
And after I'm done with you, I'll find the traitor who helped you! * chuckles *
And I got a pretty good guess on who it could be!
* holds his chin to mock him *
What do you think, Mr. Fields?
Any last insults you want to throw at me before I rewrite history?!

No response.

Oh, man! Did I scare you off too much?
* grins *
Are you scared of what I will do to… her?

And at that moment, Sarpo finally snapped. Without thinking, he turned his robotic hand into a blade and swiped Maizie. Maizie stumbled back a few steps, holding her left arm… but she didn't feel anything.

It took her a second to register what had just happened. Her hand... was no longer there.



She looked next to Sarpo and saw her left arm lying there with blood on the floor, reflecting her face.

W-WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

Maizie couldn’t help but kneel and grip her cloth in pain, screaming while trying to stop the bleeding with her torn cape.

Sarpo wanted to end her here and now, but he was also bleeding to death. The more time he spent here, the more likely it would be for him to lose his consciousness. Suddenly, the once crystallized door was torn right open with a bunch of crystal knights holding their own crystallizers. They were shocked at the scene in front of them.

Sarpo took advantage of their shock and decided to run away from the Crystal Kingdom. He narrowly dodged a handful of blasts from the Crystal Knights as he made his way outside. He looked at the kingdom’s walls to see if he could make it outside without losing his consciousness. Meanwhile, the Crystal Knights outside realized what was going on and started firing towards him. It was hard to

both dodge attacks and also find somewhere to break into. After a while, he noticed a cracked open, weakened, spot on the kingdom's walls. He didn't know what caused this in the first place but he wasn't going to question it now! He blasted it right open to get away, trying to keep his cool while his whole body was hurting from his injuries. He had no idea where to go but the farther he got away from the kingdom, the better. Unfortunately, his boosters run out of power mid flight, causing him to lose his consciousness in the process. He started falling to the ground at high speeds. The last thing he could think of before everything went black was... the love of his life.

Meanwhile, Maizie was still in the Throne room, holding her shoulder as she screamed as loud as she could. No matter what she did, the pain wouldn't go away, the bleeding wouldn't stop. She reached for her staff and tried to cast a spell on her own arm. The crystals began to form over her wound and as they did, the agony became unbearable for a moment. But after the process was done, she had a functioning arm again but this time… it was a crystal monster arm. The group of Crystal Knights were trying their hardest to keep their Queen calm and safe.

My Queen!
Are you...
What happened to your arm!?

Where...
*Coughs *
Where's our traitor?!
Bring them to me!!

Clara was shocked to see her infallible Queen in such a pitiful state… If only she could bear witness to what happened prior to their entrance. Reluctantly, Clara nods, then tells her comrades to bring over Cloe.

After a few minutes, Clara and a random crystal knight brought over the now awake Cloe. Cloe was shocked to see that the whole room had become a mess, not to mention Maizie's new monster arm.

Of course... That makes sense!
Of course it was you!
I knew it! HAH!
* hits herself on the head *
OF COURSE! HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID?!

What happened to Sarpo, you monster?!

What happened to Sarpo?!
* spits out blood *
What happened to ME?!
I LOST MY ARM BECAUSE OF HIM!

Serves you right, you monster!

ENOUGH!

From sheer anger, Maizie grabbed Cloe by the neck with her new arm. She was ruthless.

Anything else you want to add, huh?!
ANYTHING?!

After getting no response from a both frustrated and scared Cloe, Maizie threw her to the ground with force.

M-my queen-

Give me my staff, Clara.

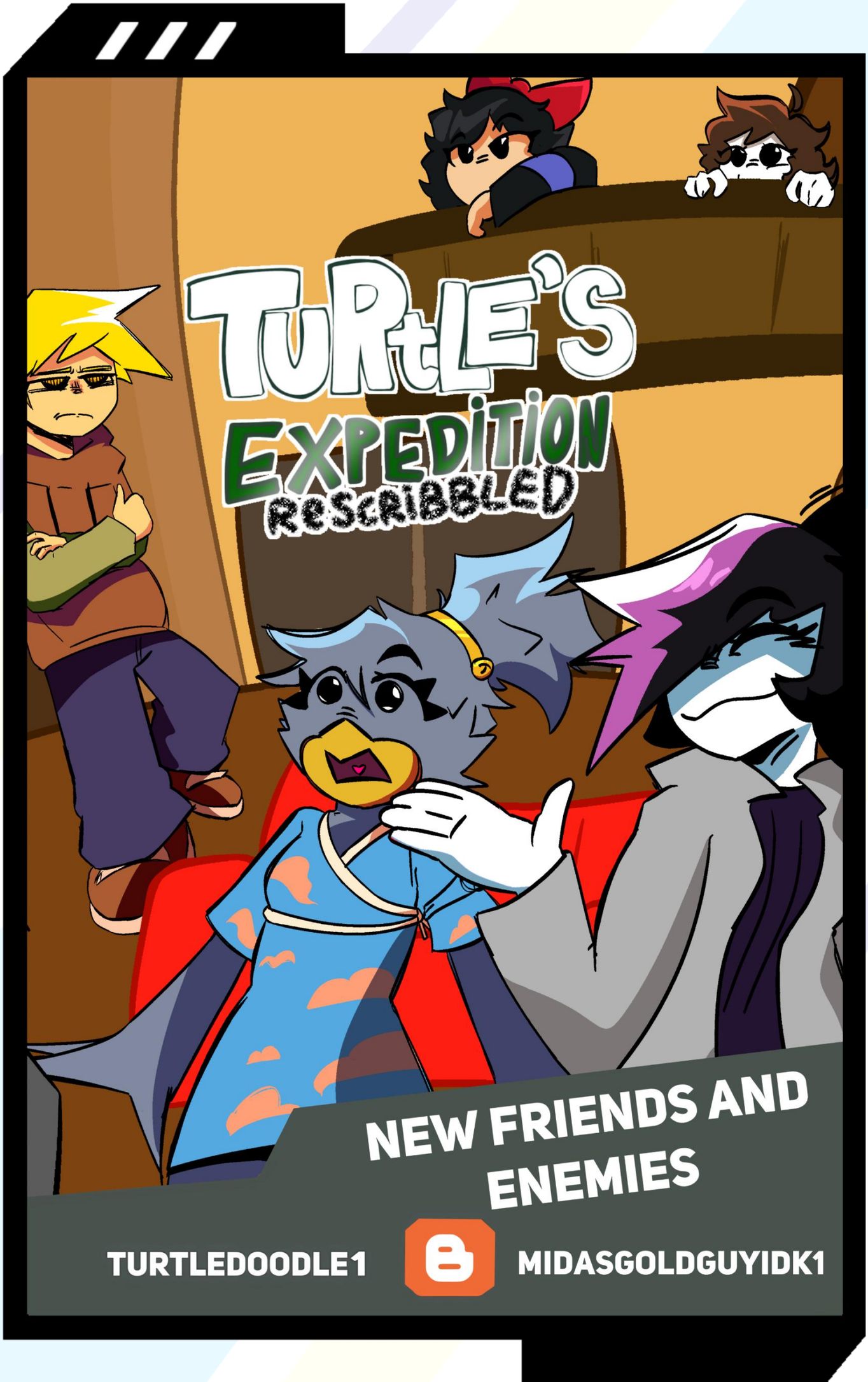
I will show these ingrates what happens when they try to make a fool out of me!

Clara was terrified of Maizie at that moment. Sure, she seemed angry when she lost to that sorcerer but... this?! It was a whole other level. Even though she had concerns, by all means, Clara was in for the cause. She grabbed the staff from the ground and gently handed it over to Maizie. After quickly snatching her staff from Clara's hands , Maizie pointed it at Cloe. She closed her eyes, holding back tears. She was terrified, knowing what was going to happen to her. All she could do now was to wish for this nightmare to be over. And then, there was silence.

Cloe was now crystallized, just how she should have been from the start. Maizie smiled and looked back at her army.

Attention, everyone! Welcome our newest recruit into our ranks! Now, fully loyal to my Kingdom!

"Give a warm salute to our new ally, Cloe Meow!"


TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
NEW FRIENDS AND ENEMIES
TURTLEDOODLE1
MIDASGOLDGUYIDK1

CHAPTER 34: NEW FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

A few hours had passed by since the battle that took place inside the castle. A blonde girl was patiently waiting in front of the doctor's office to hear any news about her friend. She almost even fell asleep at one point. But after a while of waiting, the office door opened. Lydia shook her head to get it together and got up to see what was up. Instead of being greeted by the doctor herself, she saw Terry with a few bandages around his arms.

And just like I said, don't forget to do your exercises!

* sighs *
You got it, chief.

That's Doctor Oasis to you!

The doctor slammed the door after him.

Geez, that lady has a few problems.

Nevermind her!
* goes to check up on him *
Terry, are you alright?!

Y-yeah, I'm fine.
I am just...
* holds his left shoulder in pain *
...confused if anything.

What even happened?!
* holds his shoulder for comfort *
I heard other crystal knights talk about how Cloe went rogue and attacked you…

Before Terry could respond back to his friend/little sister, he saw someone walking towards them in the halls and instantly frowned. He really didn't want to see her of all people now.

Terry?

Terry points at the person walking towards them.

* grits his teeth *
How about you ask her yourself?

Lydia turned her back and saw Cloe herself waiting for her chance to join their conversation. Strangely enough, Terry noticed her being... sad?

Cloe?!

…

What happened back there?!
* angrily points at her *
Why did you do that?!

Let her go.

(confused) B-but-

She came here to say something, Lydia.
She wouldn’t be here otherwise.

Lydia lets Cloe go and goes back to treat Terry. He seemed quite hurt after the whole debacle with Cloe. She sighed in regret as she sat down next to the two.

I’m really sorry, you two.
The rumors were true, I did act as a double agent for the non crystallized people outside.
* picks up her hat and looks at it *
But... Now I realize that it was the wrong thing to do.

Suddenly, Cloe threw her tophat to the ground and looked the two in the eyes.

I’m done sticking with them.

The two were both shocked by this. They expected her to say literally anything else.

B-but-

I mean it.
* looks at Terry *
I’m sorry for hurting you like this, Terry.
I will make sure you recover safely.

Cloe smiled at him and while he was hesitant at first, Terry also

smiled back.

Even though I was pretending to be someone I wasn't for the longest time, the one thing I didn't lie about was enjoying you guys' company.

Lydia started tearing up like a little baby while Terry calmed her down.

We appreciate that, Ms. Meow.
We really do.

I'm glad you do.
* gets up *
I promise I will make up for my mistakes.

Oh... you are leaving?

Unfortunately so.
But I promise I will be right back.
For real this time.

Alright then...
* sniffs *
Bye bye...

Goodbye you two!

The two waved at Cloe and watched as she left for something else

entirely. Something more important perhaps?

You think she really meant that?

* holds his bandages *
I feel she wouldn’t have bothered with us if she didn’t care.

Ooh, I see...

Lydia got up and looked at the small window behind them. The hole Sarpo left behind was still fresh and new.

When do you think they are gonna fix that?

I think...

* raises her eyebrow *
Yeah?

Nevermind.
* coughs *
I was going to say... I heard that other crystal knights were going to fix that sooner rather than later.
Goodness knows we don’t want to deal with another Xtress situation.

Yeah...

* shivers *
I don’t want to go back to that...

* scratches his back *
But hey, on the plus side, we can spend a bit more time together now that my bones are all messed up!

Hey, don’t say it like that!
* lightly hits him *
Ya’ jerk!

Just wait ‘till I’m back to form, nerd!

The two laughed together for a while and then decided to get up. Lydia helped Terry walk for a bit, even if he was much heavier than she would have wanted. But before they could reach the canteen, a crystal knight stopped them in their tracks.

Sorry, is this... Ms. May and Mr. Govner?

Terry looked back in confusion.

Yes?

That’s us, sir!

You wanted something?

The Queen assigned you two to a very important mission!

Oh?

* sighs *
Okay then.
* cracks knuckles *
When do we start?

“We”?
No, no, no.
There’s no “we” here.

Wh-

What do you mean?

The queen is sending you guys on two separate missions!
This instant, in fact.

The two were distraught after hearing the news. Sure, they would love to go on missions for their queen but... separating from each other?

H-hold on!
I have a few questions!

Yeah, just tell us what the missions are about at least!

No can do!
* looks around *
Especially here!

“It’s top secret!”

Back at the outside world;

It was an unexpected day on Planet Perdiah. Just as Artender thought his life was going to change for the worst forever, a mysterious group of Travelers saved his daughter from the clutches of that robot. After being saved by the bird traveler, Emily ran towards her dad for comfort.

DAD!!

EMILY!

The bird Traveler watched as Emily hugged Artender for comfort.

I-I’m so sorry, I didn’t-

It’s alright, dear.
* kisses her on the forehead *
Thank goodness, you are safe.

I was just trying to be brave and strong…

You still are brave, sweetie.
Never forget that.
* notices the traveler group looking at them *
We will talk about this some other time, okay?
I need to talk with our “guests”.

Okay...

* calls for support *
Midori, please get her inside.
I want her to stay away from danger.

Of course.

O-okay...
* holds her hand *
Please come back soon, dad...

* smiles *
I will, don’t worry.

Now that the crystal knights were taken care of, it was time to find out what this group’s deal was.

Who do you work for?
And who is this “Hawk” character you are referring to?

The bird traveler ties up the last crystal knight with a rope and looks back at Artender.

Geez, why would we save you guys if we weren't on your side?

...fair point.

* points at the bird Traveler *
Nice moves back there!
* chuckles *
Of course, I would have done better myself but yours was also decent.

Hm…

Henna looked at Hood more closely. She recognized her from somewhere but she was unsure who she was. Her voice sounded familiar to her.

By the way, where did that robot go off to?

Oh, that freak show?
* chuckles *
We sent it far into the depths.
It's not getting out anytime soon.

Also… what do you mean by "Hawk's daughter"?

You don’t know about him?
Cornelius Hawk? The mighty Traveler warrior?
Surely your leader, Sarpo, should have a clue.

He’s… not here, right now.

...I see.

* looks at the group behind her *
I’m assuming you are the leader of this tribe?

You stand corrected!
We have been fighting off against these crystal knights since that dastardly queen decided to show her face...
* points at Artender *
So, who’s the leader of you guys’ tribe then?

ME!

The two looked at each other in disgust.

Oh, screw off!
You joined the party later!

I’m the brains of this operation, pumpkin.
You would be nothing without me!

You stubborn-

Okay, that’s enough.

Henna points at Artender and then flip flops over the two.

Eenie, meenie, miney...
* stops on Hood *
You!

God damn it!

Woo, I win!
You lose!

Artender looks around and realizes that there could be more crystal knights coming at them.

Hurry, we should get these crystal knights inside our base before any more come-

Sorry, I listen to pinky.

That’s right!
We should totally do that!

Grr...

If you say so.

Henna orders her group to carry the crystal knights to the underground basement. All of them take the slide down to the base, some enjoying it more than others. Once they reached there, Henna looked around the basement and was fascinated by it.

I gotta admit, this is a very well thought out place.
There's so much stuff here!
Medics, training rooms, individual rooms, prison cells...

He he, don't mention it, pumpkin!

(confused) You guys don't have a hideout of your own?

Not quite.
We are a Traveler tribe, first and foremost.
We don't "stay" in one place.
Besides the ones who used to live in Diamond City.
We regrouped and protected each other ever since these knights started attacking.

Ooh, I see.
* looks at Henna *
Tell you what though.
You should totally join our group!
We are training everyday to fight against the Crystal Queen.

Yeah!
And your circus freaks-
* Artender hits her with his elbow *

OW!
I mean... Your very cool and wholesome traveler group can feel themselves at home here!

Hm... it’s a tempting offer but...

But what...

Wait.

Henna backs away a few steps and pulls out her dagger towards Hood.

I recognize you now.
* points at her with the dagger *
You are Hood Riley!
The arch nemesis of Sarpo and the number 1 enemy of MPC!

Ehm... yeap!
The one and only!

You look a lot different than how my father described...

Yeah, nice to know your whole family is filled with old timers.

Hmpf...
* points the dagger at Artender *
Why are you teaming up with him?!

It’s “her” actually.

Oh... okay.
(That makes a lot more sense actually.)
But ehem.
* moves closer to Artender with the dagger *
Tell me, why are you teaming up with her then?!

Well... she’s the only one who knows of the threat we have been dealing with.

Yeah, lil’ Maizie kinda used to be one of my hoodsters.
* chuckles *
Whoops.

Oh great, so we are technically cleaning up your mess then.
Wonderful.
* puts away her dagger *
Sorry blondie but I refuse to join you blokes with HER in charge.

Tee hee, you are so sweet.

Please Henna, I beg you.
* sits down and bows in a worshipping way *
I will do anything, please!

Woah, woah, calm down.
* backs away *
Sheesh.

Henna looks at her group of travelers. They were happily hanging out with other people while some were getting treatments because of their battle scars.

* sighs *
...fine.
I guess we can stay with your group for the time being.

Oh, thank you so much!

But I won't take orders from pinky any longer!
I will only listen to YOU from now on.

O-of course!
I promise it will be worth it!

Whatevs.

Henna leaves to look after her people. She saw that Midori was both taking care of Emily and the Traveler youngins. Henna smiles in response. Artender sighs in relief and stands up, only to be greeted with Hood giggling to herself.

Man, you folded so easily!

Oh, shut it, Hood.
You know we need extra manpower… traveler…power?
You get it!

Yeah, yeah but it was so funny seeing you so pathetic.

* sighs *
Boy, am I touched.

Artender looks at the radio in worry. He was hoping his friends on the other side had a much better time than they had.

Back at the Crystal Kingdom; the surgeries were still continuing. Ever since Maizie lost her arm in the battle with Sarpo, she had been getting treatments non-stop from her personal medics. But no amount of bandages or stolen healing potion could fix her already torn apart arm. They realized that their queen crystallizing her arm right after it was cut off made it impossible for her to get her arm back but they were too afraid to tell her the harsh truth. So, they decided that her getting used to the new crystal arm would be better in the long run. Little did they know that her heart was also damaged by something…

Maizie was frustrated beyond belief. Her arm, all of her careful planning… now all gone. She couldn't believe there were two traitors under her nose this whole time! She sent a group of crystal knights to find Sarpo and crystallize him if necessary but they were unsuccessful in doing so. She couldn't contact Unit SRP either and Bushra's team was nowhere to be seen. She knew they were also caught. She saw Clara asleep next to her patient room but decided to ignore her, now wasn't the time.

Maizie entered her throne room and slammed the door with her new crystal arm. Even if it hurt, she knew she had to get used to it. She walked towards the mirror and looked at what became of her. She had messy hair, the crown was misplaced, her outfit was worse than ever. And most importantly, her crystal arm was an eyesore. In frustration, Maizie broke the mirror with her crystal arm. All that power in the world... and yet, she couldn't even win once.

Of course she couldn't, she thought to herself. They had an insider agent this whole time! That had to be the reason! Maizie quickly realized she could use this to her advantage.

But first, she wanted to eat something.

You called for me, Ms. Thorn?

Cloe entered the throne room only to be greeted by a giant mess. And in the middle of it all, Maizie was lying down and eating pizza at the same time.

Yes, I have called for you.
* burps *
Sorry for that, you want a slice too?

...no, thanks.

* shrugs *
Your loss.

Before we start, I would just like to apologize to you for my treacherous actions.
I was a fool.

Hm... that’s very nice of you, Cloe.
Speaking of the past...
* points at her with the pizza slice she was holding *
Tell me all you know about Sarpo and the resistance!

As you wish.
* coughs *
Me and Sarpo faked being crystal knights for quite some time now.
Sarpo was planning on taking you down that night but he failed and

ran off.
I wish we could have crystallized him when we got the chance…
I really miss him.

Uh huh.
* takes a bite *
Go on.

I have been bringing Sarpo upgrades for his cybernetics secretly every night.
I wish the cameras caught me back then... but I can’t stop to think about it now.

I see how it all went down.
Now tell me about the resistance!

Of course.
They are hiding inside a basement under Town Mercia.
G, Artender, Emily and Hood are all hiding there.

Curse it all!
So that’s why Unit SRP didn’t come back.

Yes, they must have taken him down.

Anything else?

Actually, there is one thing left.

Carry on.

You have been trying to get all of Xtress' powers to revive your... loved one, right?

* sighs *
Yes, Cloe.
You must have a very good reason to bring this up!

I know we are trying to capture Xtress for his powers but there's one more person on the planet with a piece of his powers.

Impossible.
I already have G and Bushra's abilities!
There can't be anyone else!

I'm afraid, there is one.
* reaches out to her pockets and shows Maizie a picture of MPC2 *
The name's PotaTeo.
He's a sentient potato, the adopted son of Artender.
He is Xtress' biological son because of an accident.

WHAT?!
* stands up *
Since when did they have a sentient potato with them?!

Since the beginning, really.
We tried to keep him a secret once you first invited us here... sorry

again.

GRR!
This is so infuriating!
They think they are so clever, huh?!

Suddenly, the two heard sounds of the door knocking.

Who is it?!

The door opens to reveal a saddened Clara, holding flowers with a sign that said “Get Well Soon!” for her love.

Oh, it’s you.

My queen!
Are you doing alright?!

Yes, I’m fine, Clara.
What do you want?

N-nothing!
I just wanted to make sure you were alright!

Well, you don’t have to worry now because I’m -a- okay!

Hm... I see.
* puts the flowers on a messed up desk *

Is there something else I can do for you?

Maizie suddenly starts to smile. She had an idea.

Oh yes, you can!

Maizie walks over to Cloe and grabs the picture out of her hands. She gives it to Clara instead.

This is Potato Joe or whatever his name is!
He has a part of Xtress' powers too!
I need you to bring him to me in one piece!
* frowns *
And I don't want any more failures on your end, Clara!
Is that understood?!

* sighs *
...Of course, my queen.

Excellent work, you two.
You are both dismissed.

Cloe started walking away from the throne. She and Clara looked at each other before Cloe exited the room.

What are you still doing here, Clara?
I told you to leave too.

But my queen, you didn't assign me to a group of crystal knights yet.

...I didn't?

Clara shook her head like a lost puppy.

Huh, that's odd.
* chuckles like a maniac *
Silly me!
* looks at her left side *
I love you too, hon!

...excuse you?

I-I meant-
* coughs *
You are assigned to team C37!
Tell them to pack up!

Of course.

Clara looks at Maizie one more time before leaving the room. Something was off about her. Clara went to her room to pack up her stuff. It was going to be a tough journey ahead. She pulls out the picture and looks at it again. Next to "Potato Joe", there was a blonde man cheering him on. Clara knew this person, he was an MPC2 member. She figured she would find him under Town Mercia. (She had been listening to Maizie and Cloe's conversation for a while.)

She packed her stuff up and locked her room with her key. The key... she chuckled. She remembered the time she lost the keys and blamed it on her teammates; Terry and Lydia... That's right, Terry and Lydia!

Clara looked around the halls and rushed to their rooms. They had to be there! When she reached there, she walked towards the door to knock on it but suddenly stopped herself. She was unsure. What if the

two were mad, despite what Cloe said to her? But then, she bit her lips and knocked on the door, waiting for a bunch of yelling.

But surprisingly, there was no one. She was confused. She rushed over to Terry's room and knocked on his door too but same deal. No one responded. Clara figured they were hanging out in the canteen! But sadly, she was proven incorrect once again. She was starting to feel bad about herself. She had to know what was going on.

Hey, you there?

What?

Have you seen anyone named Lydia or Terry around here?

Actually yeah.

* smiles *
Really?!

Yup.
The two left for separate missions just a few hours ago.
To Town Bloom and Downer respectively if I recall correctly.

...oh.

Yup, sorry if you were looking for them.

I… see.
Thanks.

Clara left the canteen in silence and disbelief. They were waiting for her this whole time and by the time she decided to make amends, they both weren’t here. Clara sighed and looked at the canteen again. Oh, how she wished things went differently between them.

Ugh... where am I...

Wake up, sleeping beauty!

Gah!
Hood?!
And...
* looks around *
Where am I?

You are inside one of our cells, pumpkin!

So... did I fail the job?

Yeah, pretty much.
* crosses her arms *
Do you remember how you people used to keep me inside a prison cell?!
* chuckles *
Look how the turns have tabled!

Uh... what?

Can it, Hood.
You are making him confused.

Sigh, fine.
Can’t a girl just have some fun around here?

* looks at Henna *
Please ignore her.

Alright.

Artender?!

Hey Bushra.
Glad you are awake, buddy.

So uhm… can you open the locks so I can take you guys to the Crystal Kingdom?

Not a chance, Bushra.
I know you aren’t feeling entirely like yourself but I’m not going to hurt you in any way.

But pleaseeee.

Bushra, please stop trying.
You will thank me later, I promise.

Oh, hi Mr. Stoked!

Hey Emily!
Can you tell your uncle to set me free?

But you have one of those nasty crystals on your head!

Well... you get used to it.

Enough of this.
* looks at Bushra *
We are not getting ourselves crystallized Bushra and that’s final!

Sheesh, you really do sound like Hood!

I sound like Hood?!

I sound nothing like her!

Artender looks at Hood with anger and sees her giggling.

Sorry, I couldn’t waste the opportunity.

Sigh, whatever.
* looks at Henna *
Want me to show you the other places?

Sure.

Alright then.
* looks at Emily *
Hang out with Midori and the other kids, sweetie.
I will be back once I introduce Ms. Hawk around the place.

Okay!
* waves at Artender *
Have fun on your date, Uncle Tender!

WHAT?!

I-It’s not a date, Emily!
I swear...

It’s fine.
Kids are kinda silly like that sometimes.

Yeah... you are right.
* sees Hood still messing around with Bushra *

Take care of yourselves too, Hood and Bushra.

See ya around, pumpkin.
* looks at Bushra again *
Okay, let’s continue.
Would you rather fight against 5 million hoodsters or 5 hoodster millions!?

Man, this sucks.
(I wonder what happened to that dumb robot…)

So, here’s our training room!
You can practice sword fighting, use your magic powers against the spare dummies-

How about potion making?

Potion making?
Well, you see.
We had a supplier back in Diamond City but I think both of those guys got crystallized alongside the others.

Hm... that’s a shame.
Potion making is a fine craftsmanship.
* points at her group *
We have a few potion makers in our tribe.
They are mostly support based though.
We prohibited the creation and use of potions for violence.

Why so?

We realized that it was way too unstable to use for the average person.
Only a cold and insane person could use them without breaking a sweat.

Interesting.

You asked for a reason?

Actually, yeah.
There’s like a trio of hoodsters, called the Rascals, going around and robbing people.
One of those three uses explosive potions for her own gain.

Fascinating.
Never thought someone could use those types of potions that effortlessly.

Yup, it sure is fascinating.

Artender sits down on a chair and tells Henna to sit down as well.

I gotta say, ‘Tender.
You really are a good leader.

Aww... don’t mention it!

I would even argue you are better at managing things than Sarpo!

Um... I’m not sure I would go THAT far... but I appreciate it!

No problem.
* looks around the base *
Oh yeah, speaking of.
Where’s Sarpo anyways?

Oh, he’s inside the Crystal Kingdom right now.
He’s playing double agent with Cloe by his side-

Uhm... can you say that again?

He’s playing double agent with Cloe by his side?

Cloe... Are you talking about Cloe Meow?!

...yea?

I know her!

You do?!

Yep!
We were friends when we were little.
I remember when we last talked with each other before my dad decided on the Traveler and human exchange program.

...I feel like I’m missing a lot of context here.

Yeah... it’s a lot.
I will have to explain it later.
But the point is, I can’t believe Cloe is still around!

Yeah, she is!
She has become a remarkable lady in her own right!

Wowie...

* points at the radio *
Why not call her?
I can only imagine her surprise once she realizes she’s talking to an old friend!

Heck yeah!
* looks at the radio *
What do you mean “call” her?
All the connections are down!

Besides radios!
Cloe discovered that we could communicate by using specific frequencies!

Oh wow, that’s very smart!
She’s still as smart as ever, I see.

Yeah.
* stands up *
Watch this.

Artender quickly changes the frequencies as the buzzing sounds get replaced with silence.

Ta-daa!
We are connected.
* whispers *
Hey, Cloe!
We are here!
I have someone you will find very interesting.

No response.

Cloe?

Move back a bit.
* also whispers to the radio *
Heya Cloe!
It’s me, your old friend Henna!

Still no response. Artender was confused and most importantly, worried.

Are you sure this thing works?

I-I’m sure of it.
Otherwise, there would still be buzzing sounds...
What on Perdiah is going on?!

Much to Artender’s shock, Cloe finally speaks up.

I have seen the light my friends.
And now, I will help you find yours.
I have given your location to the crystal knights.
Please do not resist-

Before she could finish her sentence, Artender changes the frequency. Leaving them with the nauseating buzzing sound. Artender and Henna looked at each other in shock. None of them are safe here now.

TE:R
ADVENTURES X
THE CHAOS DETOUR
(1/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
FALIN

THE CHAOS DETOUR (1/3)

A couple of days had passed since the trio of G, Array and PotaTeo started travelling all around Perdiah! Their goal was to help possible survivors from Maizie's wrath! And their first destination was none other than Town Bloom!

* sweats *
Oh man…

(worried) What's up Array?

* smirks *
The clouds.

* frowns *
(sarcastically) Ha ha, very funny.

Array chuckled and gave PotaTeo a high five.

Real talk though, we've been walking around for a while now.
* stretches his back *
You think we should rest for the day?

Hm...
* pulls out the map *
While that sounds nice... we are almost there!

Sigh… okay then.
* looks at PotaTeo *

Don’t forget that we should look for a radio once we reach there!

Oh, yeah, don’t worry.
The moment we get our hands on one, we can let our folks know what’s up.
* looks at Array *
Don’t do the bit.

* chuckles *
Okay, okay!
* hits a pebble away *
How do you think they are gonna react to us going on this... detour?

I’m… not sure actually.
I just hope Artender won’t be mad about the Teo situation.

Knowing the guy, he probably is.

Sssh… don’t jinx it.

* giggles *
Alright, alright.
* stretches his arms behind his head *
It’s been a while since I talked to any of them, I wonder how they are gonna react to seeing me with you guys...

I’m positive they will be happy to know that you are okay.
* chuckles *
Not as much as me though, that’s for sure!

Aww…
* blushes *
You didn’t mean that!

I sure did!

PotaTeo rolled his eyes. He just wanted them to get it over with. Weirdly enough, PotaTeo saw something with the cornet of his eye. It was... a hoverbike with three people riding on it. He cleared his eyes and looked in that direction again but it was... gone. He was confused but ultimately shrugged it off, thinking it was just his imagination.

After walking for a few more minutes (with the two still flirting with each other), PotaTeo noticed the town ahead of them. He lightly hit Array’s hand and pointed at the town.

OW!
What was that for, Teo?!
* looks where PotaTeo was pointing at *
Oh...

This... this can’t be!

The two were expecting crystal knights hunting down the remaing survivors but instead, what they saw was something far worse.

This once peaceful town resort filled with flowers was now getting raided by hooded figures all led by a figure both G and Array never wanted to see again.

Loot ‘em all up, boys!
You gotta do what it takes to survive in the apocalypse!

The trio hide behind a nearby tree and continue watching the

hoodster army steal from the innocent townsfolk.

* whispers *
What the heck is he doing here?!
I thought he would have been crystallized by now!

* sighs *
No such luck.
We need to rid them away from the town!

Before things get worse, right?

Ayy, you read my mind!

G knew he had to think fast. He couldn’t just let the hoodsters go with the town’s stuff, not on his watch.

So G, what are we going to do?

I’m thinking about it...

The two continued brainstorming. This was more frustrating than I imagined, Array thought to himself. But suddenly, a lightbulb appeared above his head (metaphorically speaking).

I just got an idea but promise me that you won’t freak out, okay?

O-Okay?

Very well.

Before G realized what was going on, Array suddenly ran towards the town and shouted;

HEY, SURVEY!
RECOGNIZE ME?!

What the-

Survey looked around himself all confused. He recognized that voice anywhere.

It’s you again!

You bet!

From all the stress, G followed Array from behind.

WHAT ON PERDIAH DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?!

I was going to buy you two sometime, you dum dum!

That’s not-
* turns red from embarrassment *
…oh.

Oh, of course.
Wouldn’t have one without the other, would we?

* whispers *
Uhm, sir?

What is it, minion?!
I’m in the middle of something here!

Should we shoot in for the kill?

No.
Wait for my commands.
* smiles *
You know, I’m not surprised you didn’t get the crystal disease.
You are just as resilient as you are annoying.

You shut it!

Yeah, stay back!

My my, don’t you know it’s rude to talk like that to the elderly?
Who taught you manners, huh?

He doesn’t have to answer YOU of all people!

YEAH!
* points at Survey *
What are YOU doing here?!

Same could be asked to you.

Ugh!
* hits the ground with his left foot *
You are so frustrating!
Stop twisting my words!

Array, calm down-

I have had it with this man!

My my, since when did you hold a grudge?

Stop avoiding the question and answer me!

Fine, have it your way.
* coughs *
We have been raiding these towns left and right to survive since the "Crystal Queen" started poisoning our world.
This planet should only be ruled by brute strength!
And that's what Hood and Xtress provide-

We just asked what you were doing here, we didn't ask for a dang

autobiography!

Oh, you stubborn-
* points at the two *
Enough playing nice... FIRE!

The two split up and tried leading the hoodsters away from the town. Survey ordered most of his hoodsters to chase after G while he personally went after Array himself. After all, Survey still had personal beef with him.

Hey, you there!

EEP!

You are coming with me!

O-okay!

It’s time to show that fool not to threaten Mike Survey ever again!

Yeah!!
Follow after the green man, you jerks!

Meanwhile, a bunch of hoodsters were chasing after G. He pulled out his hammer and spinned it around to block all the bullets. It was refreshing to go after laser guns rather than the usual crystal magicks. While running, G noticed an innocent kid looking at him behind a resort.

One second, fellas.

G hit the ground with his hammer and then pulled it towards himself while it was stuck on the ground, causing a small rock wall to emerge.

Now that’s what I’m talking about.

G made a run for it to talk with the kid still watching him.

Hey there, kid!
* points at the forest ahead *
Get your folks out of town and wait for us there!
We are here to help!

O-okay!

Thank you.
* notices the wall slowly getting destroyed *
Now, go!
I will distract them!

G blocked all the bullets coming towards the kid and started going on the offensive. These hoodsters were pushovers compared to the crystal knights.

HAH!
You guys are soooo outdated!
Are you all still wearing those dinky hoods?
Right as he mocked the hoodsters, someone managed to get in a lucky shot on G’s left shoulder which made him lose his confidence.

ACK!

G felt like the whole world was spinning around him. He was getting weaker by the second. He thought he wouldn't have to deal with this feeling again after he made peace with his inner self.

With all of his remaining strength, G hit the ground with his hammer to make them fall to the ground. Before they could get up, G climbed up the nearest tree and made a whirlwind with his hammer. The hoodsters weren't prepared for an attack like this as they all flew somewhere far away. G tried catching his breath after the fact. This was tougher than he expected. But suddenly, he realized something. Sure, he captured a bunch of hoodsters but where was their leader... G's eyes suddenly widened.

ARRAY!

* dodges the bullets *
GAH!

You have nowhere to run, little boy.

Meanwhile, Array was trying to distract Survey and a few hoodsters he brought with him. He was using his gauntlet to throw them off their game but Survey seemed prepared for his tricks this time.

Try that again, I dare you!

As a latch ditch effort, Array tried punching Survey on the face before Survey kicked Array's arm with his feet.

ACK!
* holding his arm *

Y-you-

Does that bring back memories?

Why are you so fixated on me?!
I didn’t do anything to you!

“I didn’t do anything to you.”, he says.
You took down a lot of my precious hoodsters that night, Array.
With your death, I will honor the ones who have fallen for our cause!

So dramatic...

Oh, don’t give me that!
Who was the one who latched out at me that night?
Your friends didn’t seem to like that, no?

N-no, they forgave me!

Are you certain?
It seems to me that they only forgave you out of pity.
“The poor lost boy hanging out in the woods all by himself needs someone to comfort him.”

H-How do you know about that?

* chuckles *
Because you just confirmed it yourself.

Gah...

Array tried to punch Survey as a response but fell back on his knees.

ACK!

Look at you, you are so pathetic.
* smiles *
You don’t even have your boyfriend to help you now.

You are trying to put things in my head again...

Maybe, maybe not.
* puts his finger on Array’s chin *
Does it really matter?

No response from Array.

That’s more like it.
Usually, I would have just killed you right here and there.
But...
* chuckles *
I’m in a fiendish mood today!

Survey orders his hoodsters to give him a spare sword. He wanted to enjoy this moment.

Any last words?

Suddenly, Array started smiling. He just got a brilliant idea.

Say, you interested in taking down the Crystal Queen?

...what.

Me and my friends have been looking for a way to stop her for a while now.
* points at his backpack *
We got the plans for it inside my backpack!

Hm...

Sir, this is obviously a trick!

Don’t fall for it!

I would appreciate it if you kept quiet, gentlemen.

Sorry.

That way, you can be known as both the fearless hoodster leader AND the man who took down the Crystal Queen!

* chuckles *
I like the sound of that!

Survey grabs the backpack and looks inside it. There was nothing but a potato there.

What is this nonsense?!
There is just a potato inside!

That’s the ONE potato you don’t want to mess with!

Suddenly, the potato jumped out of the backpack and grabbed Survey on the face.

ACK!
WHAT IS GOING ON?!

Survey was trying to get rid of PotaTeo but he couldn’t see anywhere.

LET ME GO!
* points somewhere randomly *
MEN, GET THIS POTATO OFF OF ME!

The hoodsters all tried to catch PotaTeo but he was too fast for them. When PotaTeo realized there was nowhere else to go, he punched Survey in the face and then landed next to Array. He was overjoyed.

ACK!

WOO!

You go, little guy!
I told you that trick would come in handy!

N-Nonsense!
* holding his face *
You just had the element of surprise! That's all!
* picks up the sword *
Even though you have… whatever this potato thing is, with you, we will still slay both of you in cold blood!

Oh, I wouldn't be so sure of that!

Suddenly, PotaTeo started growing in size. While Survey was stunned from shock, the hoodsters next to him all dropped their weapons and ran off to the forest in fear.

What are you doing, you fools?!
Get back here!

Survey quickly looked around and saw only one hoodster remaining next to him, with a sword at hand.

I-I'm here, sir!

(Sigh.)

PotaTeo slapped Survey and the other hoodster away with his hand as they landed in the middle of the very town they were trying to rob.

Awesome work, Teo-
* holds his arm in pain *
ACK!

PotaTeo looked at his friend and got worried. He shrunk back in size to help out his friend. He took a peek inside the bag and took out a bandage to heal Array again. Coincidentally, G also arrived to help his “friend”.

Array, are you okay?!
* holds Array’s hand *
I-I’m so sorry!
I should have been here for you-

Don’t worry about me please.
* coughs *
Me and Teo took down those guys easy peasy!

But it wasn’t worth your arm getting hurt!
G sat down on his knees and helped PotaTeo with the bandages.

T-thank you…
* blushes *
I appreciate your concern G but I will be fine.
Don’t you worry.

If you say so, thunder boy!

* chuckles *
Are we giving each other nicknames again?
I thought you didn’t like them?

I did say that, didn’t I...
* shrugs *
Oh well, I’m not so sure anymore.

Come to think of it... I think I actually like them now.
It’s cute.

Wow, you really did change!

Sure seems like it.
* looks at the distance *
Now, we gotta get these people to safety before Survey or the crystal knights come!

Y-yeah!

Array noticed G looking unsure. Something didn’t feel right.

You think… Survey will be back soon?

I sure hope not.
He had it coming for a long time.

You thought I was done?

The trio looked behind them and saw Survey with all of his hoodsters behind him. They recruited so fast.

I-I-

You thought you could stop the last of the hoodsters that easily?!
We robbed other places way before this wretched town and we found some of THESE bad boys!

Survey reached out to his pocket and showed them an empty potion bottle.

I-Is that-

A potion?
It sure is.
Talk about being lucky, eh?
* chuckles *
Now not even your potato friend can save you now!

HALT!

Suddenly much to everyone’s shock, a third faction entered the battlefield. A crystal knight group led by none other than... Lydia?!

Oh, it’s one of those crystal freaks!

They are called Crystal Knights.

DON’T YOU CORRECT ME!

What are they doing here...

They are here to crystallize the town, stupid!
* looks at G *
I have no idea how you can love someone so stupid!

W-wait, what do you mean by that-

Surrender now!
Or we will...
* scratches her head *
Um...

Lydia looks at the crystal knight behind her .

Did I say that right?
Was my tone intimidating?

I would say it was good enough.

Oh okay then!
* coughs *
Well then... everyone, crystallize the-
* notices something *
Wait a second…

Lydia points at G which really confused him.

The queen was looking for you!
* points at G *
Everyone, capture the green person and crystallize the rest!
(Or something like that…)

HEY, YOU THERE!
STOP THIS INSTANT!

Lydia saw Survey pointing at her and raised her eyebrow.

This is MY domain, you crystal hacks!
You can’t just push me aside like this!

And so, Town Bloom became more of a battlefield than an actual resort. There were three factions now instead of two. The hero trio, Survey’s hoodsters and of course, crystal knights led by Lydia! There were bullets, crystal beams and magical artifacts flying all around the place. At this rate, there wouldn’t be any traces of the town left!

G, get over here!

G was so deep in his thoughts that he didn’t realize he was a complete sitting duck in the middle of the battlefield. He followed Array’s voice and then saw him and PotaTeo talking.

Sorry, potato man.
I can’t risk you getting crystallized.
* picks up his backpack *
Please get inside.

PotaTeo reluctantly got inside the backpack again with a sad look on his face.

Array?

G, what were you doing over there?!

S-sorry!
I was just stuck in my thoughts!

Okay, okay...
* takes deep breaths *
Deep breaths...
* looks at the fight that was going on *
There’s not going to be a town to save if they keep going like this!
We need to do something!

What can we even do?!
The two of us can’t defeat two whole armies!

...what if we only had to defeat one?

Pardon?
* scratches his head *
I don’t think either side would want to team up with us, dude.

I’m very aware of that, G.
But you just gotta trust me!

Like I trusted you on your plan earlier?!
(sarcasm) Yeah, that was a VERY smart one!

G… I didn’t...

YOU ALMOST GOT YOURSELF KILLED!
And I...
* takes a deep breath *
I was afraid I would lose you again.

G...

The two kept quiet. They both felt awful about the situation.

Look.
I know my plans are the “head first, think later” type but you gotta trust me on this one!
It’s worth a shot!

Fine...
* holds his hand *
But…

Yeah?

* summons his hammer *
I want in on the plan!
Give me something to do as well!

* smiles *
Very well.

Array gazes at the blonde crystal knight leader. He hoped this would pay off.

Guys, can we focus on finding the green man, please?!

The crystal knights were too busy crystalizing the hoodsters to listen to her commands.

Guysssssss!
Pleaseeeeee!

Lydia sighed. This leadership thing was harder than she thought.

I guess we can catch them once everyone else is crystallized…

Suddenly, the guy with blue hair tried attacking Lydia head on. Lydia hopped back at the last second.

EEK!

Surrender yourselves to us hoodsters, crystal freak!
Or you will face our wrath!

Very well…
If only, I didn’t have-
* reaches out to her pocket *
THIS!

Lydia pulled out her crystal gun in a rush but she accidentally dropped it just as quickly. Before she could take it back, Survey crushed it with his foot.

* chuckles *
What were you going to say again?

...phooey.

Lydia tried taking the gun off of Survey's hand but was met with him tripping her down to the ground.

OOF!
* holding her head *
I told the queen I wanted to bring my axe but she said it wasn't "practical".
Ugh!
Stupid gun, stupid army-

YOU FINISHED?!

Lydia notices him holding a gun towards her and she raises her arms in shame.

See, was that so hard?!

…

Now you are gonna tell your army to stand down or you are going to have this bullet inside your head-
* gets hit by Array on the chest *
ACK!

Shut it, bucko!
Leave her alone!

You… rescued me?

Sure thing!
* helps her get up *
You are safe now!

Why would you do that, you twat?!
* looks around while holding his chest *
Where’s your boyfriend anyways?

That doesn’t concern you.
He’s busy with… other things.
* looks at Lydia *
Okay, uh… crystal lady.
Can we talk for a second?
Blonde to blonde?

...sure.

Let’s make a deal.
You guys can capture us when we are done with crystallizing these hoodsters!
Because this is not going to end well for none of us if this goes on like this!
* reaches out his hand *
Does that sound good?

Ooh, that sounds like a good idea, new friend!

You moron, he’s tricking you!

I don’t like the blue guy’s tone, he’s so mean!
* holds her chin *
Sure, let’s do it!

Awesome!

YOU CAN’ BE SERIOUS!

Everyone, to me!

The crystal knights all looked at Lydia and noticed her standing next to Array. Confused, they all arrive behind Lydia alongside the newly recruited crystal knights.

Crystallize this blue guy and his friends first!

But ma’am, what about the other two?

We can crystallize them later!
They surrendered!
They are gonna help us take these meanie heads down until then!

(Well, I guess this is the end.)

Survey watched in horror as Lydia and her group crystallized each and every single one of his hoodsters besides a few standing next to him.

You… you won’t get away with this, Array!
* orders his remaining hoodsters to retreat *
Mark my words, I will destroy everything you love one day!

Array looked at the fleeting hoodster army in sadness. Because even though he was no longer a hoodster, he knew people like Survey would never let him forget about his past.

Yay! We did it!
* does a quick tip tap dance *
High five?

Array doesn’t say a word and lightly hits her head with his gauntlet as response. She becomes unconscious that very moment.

The crystal knights surrounded Array the second their leader went down. Before they could crystallize him, they heard the sounds of a thousand footsteps. First there was shock and then, there was fear. The crystal knights didn’t know where these sounds were coming from. But they didn’t have to wait long to find out.

As they looked behind them, they saw the townsfolk running towards them to protect their town, all led by G himself. Taking advantage of this, Array knocked back the crystal knights surrounding him with an earthquake attack and jumped inside the crowd to help with the resistance.

Great timing, G!

Psstt… yeah!
You said it!
* hits a nearby crystal knights with his hammer *
It helped that none of the townsfolk were crystallized before we arrived!

Yup!

What happened to the blonde lady?
Did you take her out like we planned?

Well yeah but I felt kinda… bad?
* hits another crystal knight *
I don’t know how to describe it.

Yeah, I know the feeling.
* holds Array’s shoulder to comfort him *
We are all helping them this way, trust me.

I know...
It still feels a bit wrong though...

The two smiled at each other for comfort and continued beating up the crystal knights. Soon, the crystal knights were all knocked unconscious with just a few townsfolk turning into crystal knights themselves.

Thanks for helping me convince your folks, little guy.

Don’t mention it, mister!

And thanks to all of you for fighting back so bravely!

Everyone cheered for G, Array and PotaTeo. Even though everyone was confused about his existence, they congratulated him

nonetheless.

* tucks G’s shirt *
Um... mister?

Yeah?

Where are we going to live now?
Those mean jerks destroyed our homes!

The kid points at what remained of the place they once called home. G definitely understood their pain.

Hm… any of you have a map of Perdiah?

We sure do!

That’s nice.
Can I take it for a second?

Sure thing, young man.

The old man gave G the map as he started circling a specific area on the map. G looked around for a place where he could make an announcement anyone could hear. He noticed a podium in the middle of the town. It was damaged obviously but it also looked like it was used by someone else recently.

* coughs *
Listen up everyone!
We have an underground resistance called Vengeful Rubies located under Town Mercia!
* points at the unconscious crystal knights *
Take these crystal knights with you as well!
They are innocent folks like you despite them being brainwashed by Maizie.
Once you reach there, I’m sure our friends will give you a place to stay!

Everyone was skeptical but also were aware that this was their only option.

Oh and one last thing!
You guys got a spare radio?

Sorry, youngster.
We don’t have such things around these parts.

* sighs *
We appreciate it nonetheless, mister.

The three waved goodbye at the townsfolk as they left to join the Vengeful Rubies. As the trio watched the townsfolk leave the remains of Town Bloom, Array looked at G with a grin on his face.

Man, since when did you get so good at public speech?

Eh… I guess it is related to that temple business.
I don’t really think about that anymore.

Hm... that’s good.

Well… what are we waiting for?
Let’s get to our next destination!

Woah, this soon?

Yup!
Isn’t it so exhilarating?!

In a way… yeah!

Yup!
I’m sure it will be fun!

PotaTeo seemed much more excited compared to last time. G thought he was getting used to the groove of things too.

* picks up the map *
Our next big stop... Town Downer!

Town Downer?
But that’s in the middle of the freaking desert!

Well... yeah!
That means the crystal knights might have not reached there yet.

Ooh!
Clever!

Yup...
* looks at his friends *
Well then... let’s do it you guys!

And so, the trio were on their way to Town Downer!

W- wait, I just realized something.

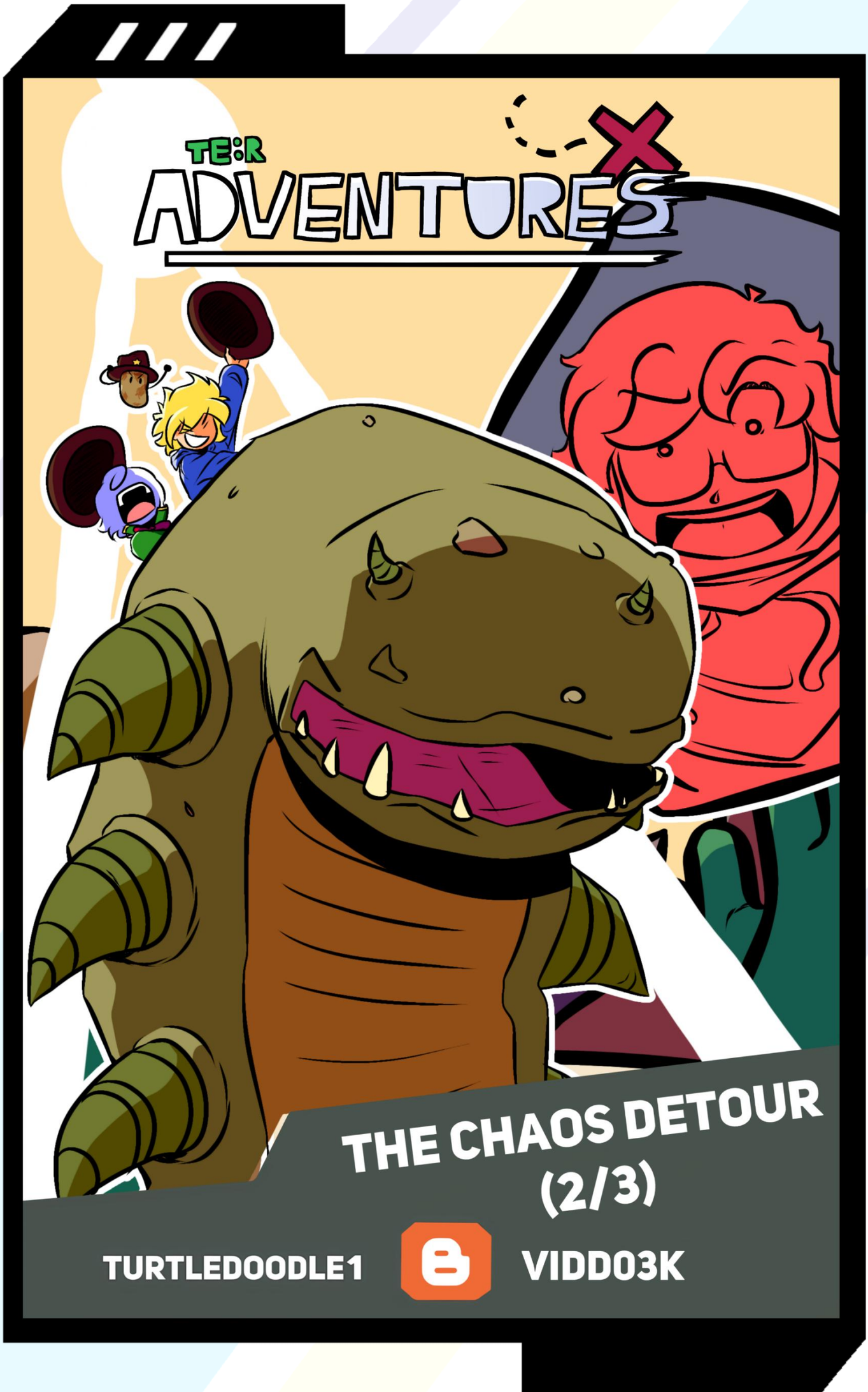
Huh? What happened?

You know about that blonde girl?

Yeah?
What about her?

While she was fighting with Survey...
Couldn’t she have just blocked the laser with the giant crystal on her head-

Sssh… I don’t think she realized that.


TE:R
ADVENTURES
THE CHAOS DETOUR
(2/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDD03K

THE CHAOS DETOUR (2/3)

It had been a whole week since the trio rescued the townsfolk of Town Bloom. It was a much more tiresome journey compared to their first outing. On their way there, they saved a few smaller towns from Maizie's wrath but that obviously took a big toll on them. Travelling around the desert certainly didn't help the situation either. It was night time with a full blue moon in the sky, guiding them through the darkness.

* looks at the map *
Well, darn.
I can't even tell if we are close to the town or not.

Oooh… water…
* tries to pick up non existent stuff in the air *
Water…

Are you doing okay, Array?

Of course…
* lightly hits his head with the gauntlet *
Wow, this thing sure packs a punch!

G realized Array was starting to hallucinate and therefore, they needed to rest for the night.

Sigh… alright.
We are taking a break for the night.

Oh sweet lord, thank goodness.

Array immediately falls to the sand and starts making a sand angel.

Look G!
I’m a big man!

* sighs *
Array, we need to find somewhere to rest first-

We are in the middle of a giant desert, G.
It’s not like a resort is going to spawn out of nowhere!

Array suddenly notices something moving underneath the sand in the distance and clears his eyes.

D-did you see that?!

See what now?

Something was moving behind you but it just disappeared!

Array, are you sure you are not hallucinating?

Of course I am!
* hits his head again *
Do I look crazy?!

…no comment.

G helps Array get up.

Look, we are gonna reach the town soon… hopefully.
But now, we need somewhere to rest.
We can't just rest on the sand!
Do you know how painful that is?!

Yeah, yeah, you got a point.

Also, is Teo alright?

Yeah, I talked with him a while ago.
He said he preferred staying inside the backpack for now.

I see-
Wait.
Did you just say "talk"?

* sniffs *
Yeah?

(Oh man, he's losing his marbles.)
Yeah, it's official.
We need to rest A.S.A.P!

G held Array's hand as they looked around for a resting place. Even a cave would suffice at this point, despite G's irrational fear of them. But to his surprise, he found a better alternative.

Is that… a sand temple?

You losing your marbles too, G?
* chuckles *
At least I’m not alone anymore...

N-no, Array.
* points at the temple *
Look!
This is the real deal, alright.

G continued dragging Array around until they reached the sand temple. It was a temple filled with a lot of ancient markings and symbols. G thought this was one of the seven magical temples but from the looks of it, it seemed like it was just a regular old temple. Array fell asleep the second they reached there.

* smiles *
...goodnight to you too, Array.
* holds his hand *
Don’t worry, I promise I will find us something to drink tomorrow.

G looked around and noticed Array’s backpack. He opened it and took PotaTeo to show him around the place. PotaTeo looked tired just like the other two.

Sup, little man.
How are things going?

PotaTeo responded with “eh” in sign language.

Oh, I see.
Well... We are inside a sand temple now!

I was meaning to ask, want to explore this place with me?
I don't really want to sleep just yet.

PotaTeo put his hand on his chin(?) and thought about his offer. After a bit, he gave G a thumbs up.

That's great, Teo!
Let's get exploring then!

PotaTeo jumped around in happiness, the two were fixing their relationship as time went on. G looked around for a light source and found a burnt torch laying on the ground. If there was a burnt one surely there was a torch that's still lit up, G thought to himself. And just as he expected, there was one. He picked up the torch with one hand and carried PotaTeo with the other.

As they went deeper and deeper into the temple, G realized the temple was much bigger than he anticipated. It looked so small on the outside but it was just an eye trick all along. The two continued walking on the halls until they reached a dead end.

Well, looks like this is the end, Teo.
* turns his back *
Oh well, that was neat.

But PotaTeo wasn't convinced just yet. This couldn't be the end. He jumped out of G's hand and went back to check on the wall.

Um… what are you doing, Teo?

PotaTeo was focused on the markings on the wall. G didn't think they accounted for much but PotaTeo was fascinated by them. And suddenly, he noticed something.

Oh?
You found something, little guy?

PotaTeo hopped to the side and pointed at one specific marking. G was unsure what it was supposed to represent. It was a curved figure with a red tint around it... G was shocked when he realized what this was.

Is that… one of Hood’s red rings?

PotaTeo nodded. He could recognize their shape and power anywhere after his adventure with Bushra. PotaTeo put his hand on the wall again and he noticed the marking glowing for a split second. He waved around his arms in shock afterwards.

Woah, woah, calm down.
* picks him up *
What’s wrong?

PotaTeo points at the marking again.

Yeah?
The marking?
I know it looks oddly similar to the rings but you think there’s something else behind it?

* nods *

Hm... do you want me to do something?

* nods again *

Alright then, tell me what I should do.

After trying to understand PotaTeo's instructions, G slowly walked towards the wall and pushed against it. After a while, both him and the red ring started glowing bright as the wall suddenly retracted to the sides, revealing a whole another floor to the temple.

W-woah!
That was so smart, Teo!

PotaTeo looked proud to have solved this on his own. G picked him up again as they started looking around this new mysterious floor. While the main floor they came from was tidied up, this new floor was a giant mess. Almost like someone came here recently. PotaTeo noticed a text on the wall to his left but it was hard to tell what was written on it.

"KOOD WUZ HAIR"

After looking around a bit more, G realized what this place used to be. It was a library!

Woah… so many books here!

G picked up a random book from the shelves to look inside it. He really wasn't a book person so he just skimmed through it and looked at the pictures inside. The book he picked up was about pocket dimensions… whatever that meant.

He picked up another one which was titled "The Legend of the Dragons" which was filled to the brim with drawings of dragons. How imaginative, G thought. When he looked back to check on PotaTeo, he noticed him poking a dead rat's body with a stick.

Uhm… you might want to stay away from that, little buddy.

He picked up PotaTeo and the two books he found interesting with him. He was also starting to get sleepy now.

Okay, it’s bedtime now, Teo.
We can visit this place again tomorrow with Array, okay?

PotaTeo gave him a thumbs up and did a yawning expression. It was time to sleep. The two got outside the mysterious floor and lied down next to Array.

The very next day, Array was the first one to wake up.

* yawns *
Good morning, guys!
Rise and shine!

Ugh... five more minutes…

Aw... Come on, G!
* shakes him *
We need to get to Town Downer before I become lucid again!

* chuckles *
So you DO remember that, huh?

Yeah... at least a tiny bit.

Well then...
* cracks his knuckles *
Good morning to you too dude!

Hehe, yeah!

* stands up *
Well, let’s start then, shall we?

H-hold on a second though.

Oh?

I need to show you something first.

Ooh!
What is it?

I don’t want to spoil the surprise!

G looks around and wakes up PotaTeo too.

Hey little buddy.
We are leaving here soon.
Want to show Array what we found last night?

PotaTeo clears his eyes and then gives G a thumbs up.

Wait, both of you are in on this?!

Yeah, we sorta had a small adventure last night.

Aw, wish I could have been there too!

No worries, Array!
We can just show you what we found right now!

G shows Array the way to the dead end and starts pushing against the wall.

There’s a very secret floor behind this door, I can’t wait for you to see it!

But to G’s shock, the marking on the wall didn’t light up nor did the secret passage open.

Um... is this some kind of in-joke?

N-no.
This shouldn’t have happened!

G leans back and then pushes against the wall again.

It should have opened like before!
* looks at PotaTeo *
Right, Teo?!

PotaTeo also seemed confused.

Look, maybe you guys were lucid last night too!
I know how that feels, it’s good to accept it and move on.

N-no!
I’m sure there was a passage here!

G looks around in panic. He notices the books he brought and points at them.

See?!
I brought those books with me last night!
They are from here!

...huh.
You might be right on that.
* picks up the book with the dragon *
This doesn’t look like your usual book.

G was left frustrated. Why couldn’t the passage just open like before? After a few more tries, he gave up and looked at Array with shame.

Sorry man, I really wanted you to see them.

All good, G!
I believe you!

Phew.
* sighs *
That’s a relief.
Glad at least someone believes me!
I thought I was going crazy!

Well, we wouldn’t want our hardest hitting fighter to lose his sanity now, would we?

* chuckles *

Right.

* stretches his elbows *
Can we go now?
I feel like it’s going to be a long day.

Oh, right!
We should do that.

The trio ready their stuff and prepare to face the burning sun in the sky once again. Before leaving, G looked at the temple one more time. There was more to this temple than it was letting on. He put “revisiting this sand temple” on his to-do list.

Let’s go, guys!
* picks up PotaTeo and puts him in his backpack *
Here you go, Teo.
* waves at G *
Yo G, you in a staring contest with that temple?

Wha-
* gets flustered *
N-no!
* crosses his arms *
Stop that.

* giggles *
Sorry, sorry.
Come on!

And so, the trio were on their way to Town Downer once again. After a few hours, the gang were tired once again. The sun was too much for all of them.

Ugh... it’s happening again!

Fear not, Array.
According to the map, we should be there very soon!

“Very soon” isn’t really assuring, you know?

Well, I don’t want to lie to you so...

Sigh.

Suddenly, the two felt the ground shaking. They both fell to the sand and started looking around in confusion.

What in Perdiah was that?!

No clue but we gotta move on before-

Before G could finish his sentence, a giant worm popped out of the sand in front of them. They were both terrified.

I-It’s the thing I saw yesterday!
The worm!

S-so you weren’t lucid?!

APPARENTLY!

The sandworm started drawing circles with them stuck in the middle. G knew this was just the creature waiting for the perfect time to feast on its prey.

We are not gonna be killed by some dumb worm!
* reaches out his hand *
Take my hand, Array!

What are you going to do?!

* smiles *
Watch and learn!

G hit the ground so hard that the force made the two jump very far up in the air. The creature was confused and trying to find where its dinner went. When they were falling, G started spinning around to make them float slowly to the ground.

Woah, that was awesome!
When did you learn that move?

By myself.
I saved me and Bushra with it one time.

Ooh, cool!

Array looks back at the worm. It seemed frustrated but also sad. While they were still floating downwards, Array noticed a flower on the ground called “the fairy duster”. He wanted to try something out.

Okay, so that could have been a better landing but at least we are all okay.
* looks over to Array *
Array?

G, can you bring me that flower real quick?

Uh... sure.
What's in your mind?

I read from somewhere that you can tame the sand worms by infecting their minds with specific flower types.
* points at the flower *
That one seems like a perfect match.

I see.
* looks away *
Just... be careful, okay?

* holds his hand *
I will, don't you worry.

Alright, good luck.
I will come to help soon!

After G left, Array picked up his backup and started talking with PotaTeo.

I need to ask you for a favor too, Teo.

Soon after, the sandworm noticed Array and PotaTeo standing still, waiting for it to attack them. The sandworm entered the sand and tried the sneaky approach to attack its prey. Array sat down and gently put his gauntlet on the sand. He could feel the sand worm's movements with his gauntlet. Once it was close, he pushed PotaTeo and himself away from the beast and punched the sand worm in the face.

As a response, the creature was madder than ever. It wanted revenge more than it wanted to eat them. Array looked at PotaTeo before leaping to fight.

Teo!
Grow in size and hold it in place until bun bun arrives!

PotaTeo gave him the thumbs up and started fighting the beast... but wait, who did he refer to as "bun bun"?

I-I got it, Array!

* punches the worm again *
Great job, G!

While PotaTeo was trying to hold the violent sand worm in place, Array was distracting it.

Gimme the flower, G!

On it!

G jumps on top of the worm with his hammer jump and gives Array the flower.

Hold it just a bit longer, Teo!
We are gonna be done here!

Array picked up the flower and threw the flower inside its mouth. Suddenly, the worm stopped fighting back and looked at its new owners with glee.

Woah, it worked!

Sure did!

The two watch as PotaTeo returned to his regular size and hopped right next to them.

So… what now?

What now?!
I just saved us guys hundreds of meters of walking!

You mean we are gonna ride on this thing’s...
* holds his chest and tries not to puke *
Back?

You think they sell saddles specifically designed for sand worms?

* twiddles his thumb *
M-maybe?

* sighs *
Just get on, G.

Okay…

And so, the trio now had a giant pet snake worm. The road to the town was now easier than ever!

Meanwhile, in Town Downer. The whole town was already invaded by the Crystal Kingdom by an attack led by none other than...

How goes the preparations?

After conquring Town Downer for themselves, Terry started staying in the mayor’s office because Maizie ordered him to do so. It was... much more boring than he imagined.

It could have been better, sir.
The heat’s not just affecting our enemies.
It’s affecting US too.

Yeah, yeah, I know.
You tend to get used to it eventually.
* looks at the paperwork in front of him *
Speaking of enemies, did you find any traces of the resistance?

No such luck, sir.
It’s like they all disappeared overnight.

That’s… not good.

They could be plotting something.
* points at the door *
Search the town again for possible secret hideouts.
They can’t take this place back.

I understand.

Terry looked at the crystal knight in sadness. There was one more thing he wanted to ask.

W-wait a second!

Oh?
What is it, sir?

Did the group I sent find out what happened to Town Bloom... and Lydia?

Oh right.
They did give us the reports once they were back from the mission.

The crystal knight coughs before giving Terry the report.

When they arrived at the town, it was abandoned. No crystal knights, no non-crystallized people, no nothing.
All they found were some dead bodies.

...I see.
* gives him back the report *
Get back to your shift, please.
And tell the others that I want to be left alone for now.

I still have paperwork to finish.

Of course.

The crystal knight leaves the room as Terry was left clueless on what happened. His friend and such a large group of crystal knights couldn’t have just disappeared! They must have been taken somewhere…

Suddenly, the door in front of Terry opened and a panicked crystal knight entered the room.

SIR!

* sighs *
What is it?
I told the last guy I was busy.

But sir, you might want to see this!
This is important!

* giggles *
Please, how bad can it be-

Suddenly, the whole ground started shaking like an earthquake just happened next to them. Terry didn’t say a word in response and left his office in a hurry.

When he saw what was outside, he was left speechless. A giant sand worm was attacking the town with three people riding on top of it. Terry noticed one of them was G Doodle himself. He had to capture them all if he had to. Terry readied his bow and raised his arm in the air to command his group.

FIRE AT WILL!
TAKE DOWN THE GIANT WORM!
BUT DON'T KILL G!

Suddenly, a few crystal knights started shooting at each other, much to Terry's surprise. This was an ambush!

You know, we were going to reveal our big surprise later but what better time is there than the MPC2 members showing up to help!

You traitors!

Terry started shooting down the resistance members with his bow but it was getting hard to tell which ones were his army and which ones were fakers. Not to mention the giant worm wrecking up their stuff.

G jumped out of the worm to help the resistance while Array was protecting his new pet. Terry wanted to have a lucky shot at Array but Array noticed it at the last second and split the arrow in half with just one swipe. Things were looking dire for the crystal knights.

Change of plans!
Don't try to hurt the beast!
Crystallize it with your blasters!

The second he gave his orders, every knight switched over to their blasters. Terry didn't know what kind of effect crystallization would have over non-humans/travelers but he didn't have much choice.

Suddenly, G appeared behind him and pushed him away with a whirlwind. While getting pushed back, Terry stuck his bow on the ground to not lose his balance.

* trying to get up *

So... you are G?

Yup, that’s me.

The queen’s been looking for you.

Oh please, I know already!
Another crystal general told me that before!

Another crystal leader...
You don’t mean... Lydia?

Who?

The blonde girl with a black skirt?

Oooh!
Yeah, that’s the girl!

So...
* readies his bow *
You are the one who captured her.

It wasn’t much of a capture but rather, carrying her to a safer place!

Terry was confused and frustrated at the same time. He couldn’t allow them to go off scot free when they knew about Lydia’s whereabouts. He was going to call for his group and capture them!

And then continue crystallizing the beast! Yes! That's what he was going to do… but he couldn't help but think of the worst outcome. What if they hurt Lydia...

KNIGHTS, FORGET THE BEAST!
* points at G *
CAPTURE THE GREEN ONE!

There was a lot of confused responses coming from the army. Shouldn't they crystallize the beast first?

What are you doing?!
Just capture him and then we can go rescue Lydia-

Trying to use this to his advantage, G trips him down with a quick kick.

ACK!

Sorry!

While Terry was falling, he slowed down his fall by putting his hands on the ground and getting up in an instant. G wasn't expecting such athletic skills from someone like him. Terry couldn't stand the humility of it all and decided on a different tactic. He threw his bow to his other hand and pulled out the mini crystallizer as a secondary ranged weapon for.

Woah, what are you-

Before G could finish his sentence, Terry started shooting arrows with his bow while also shooting with his crystallizer. He was changing the patterns of which weapon he would use next to throw G off his game. And it worked! G was struggling to keep up as he was moving to his left while barely dodging Terry's attacks. He was

a formidable foe, for sure. G was blocking all the arrow shots and reflecting them back at him but Terry's agility was far too great.

In the middle of their fight however, suddenly the crystal on Terry's head started glowing red... much to G's confusion.

Ugh!
* holding his head *
What have you done?!

Something like this has already happened before, G thought. Just what was up with this crystal situation? Taking advantage of the situation, G sneaked behind Terry and lightly hit him on the head with his hammer. He was knocked unconscious, just like his teammate. He put more of a fight than this Lydia girl, G thought to himself.

Sorry, tough guy.
* ties him up with a spare rope *
I promise you are going to see her very soon.

Meanwhile, the sand worm was almost fully crystallized. Realizing this, Array jumped out the worm with PotaTeo by his side. After the worm was fully crystallized, instead of changing sides; it just turned into an ice statue.

NOOOOO!
MY PET WORM!!!

After comforting Array, G looked around to see the losing crystal knight army. They really were outnumbered in comparison to the resistance. Once they were all knocked unconscious, everyone took a deep breath and looked at each other in relief. That was a tough fight.

Hey, you there!

* reaches out his hand *
It’s G, right?

* huff puff *
Sure is.

It’s a pleasure to meet you.
* shakes his hand *
Thanks for helping us defeat the crystal knights, you made our jobs a whole lot easier.

* smiles *
Please don’t mention it.
* looks at PotaTeo and Array *
My friends also helped a lot.

* gives the mayor a thumbs up *
We sure did!
* looks at the statue which was once his pet *
I wish my pet worm was still with us though…

If you will excuse us, we need to ask you all a question.

Oh, sure thing!

Yeah, what is it?

This town’s a big mess now.
Another crystal knight army would definitely come before we are

done fixing everything.
So please… What should we do?

I’m so glad you asked!
* looks around *
Got any spare maps?

Sure thing.

Thanks!

G circles Town Mercia once again and gives them the map.

Go to this spot and carry all the crystal knights there!
We have an underground base located there called the Vengeful Rubies.

Carry the enemy to your base?
Doesn’t that sound... dangerous?

No worries.
There are friends there who will help you once you reach there.

If you say so.
* cracks his knuckles *
Boys, we are on our way to Town Mercia!
Pick one crystal knight to carry!

Everyone split up to pick up the crystal knights. There was one guy struggling with carrying a crystal knight though. The mayor notices it.

Something wrong?

A-A bit, sir.

G looked at who he was pointing at and realized that it was the archer with the glasses who tried to get him killed.

He’s too tough for me to carry on my own.

Hm... fine.
We can carry him together.

Thank you, sir!

Don’t mention it.

Before they left however, G wanted to ask them something.
Something he wanted to ask for a very long time.

H-Hey, may I ask you something?

Sure, what is it?

Do you have a spare radio lying around?
We really need it.

Hm… there was one in my office at one point.
* points at the crystal knight he was carrying *
Not sure if their leader threw it out but I used to have one.

Suddenly, PotaTeo's eyes sparkled. He was waiting for this moment for such a long time.

Thank you so much, sir.
Safe travels.

Safe travels to you, too.

And so, the trio waved them goodbye and then quickly rushed to the mayor's office. There it was. The radio they have been looking for.

This is it.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Are you excited for this, Teo?

Teo nodded. He couldn't stand still from excitement.

You want in on this too, Array?

...maybe after you guys introduce yourselves.
I'm... a bit worried.

Oh... I see.

G quickly changed the frequencies and waited for a response. And just as he expected, he heard Artender complaining.

Who… who is this?
I swear if it’s another-

Heya, Artender!
Did you miss us?

G?! WHAT?!
WHERE ARE YOU GUYS?!

Oh, you know?
Just saving folks and kicking crystal knight butt!

Wait, that was you guys?

Yeah, silly!
We went to another one of those temples and then I got my powers back!
Isn’t that so swell?

That’s great, G!

Besides, who do you think showed those people the way to the Vengeful Rubies?

Yeah, it makes so much more sense now...
* his voice gets glitchy *
But nevermind that, is my... is my son okay?

He sure is!
* looks at PotaTeo *
I know you can’t hear him right now but rest assured, he’s doing fine.

Oh thank goodness, I was so worried.
I can’t wait to see my boy again.

PotaTeo jumped around in joy. He missed his dad and sister so much.

And that’s not all, because...

Wait, huh?!
I recognize that voice from anywhere...
Is that-

Yup, it’s me, Array!
Hi, Uncle Tender!

Array!
It’s so nice to hear from you, buddy.
I’m glad you are doing okay.

The pleasure’s all mine.

Y-yeah!

The group heard an audible sigh coming from the other side. Was something wrong going on back there?

Even though I appreciate you guys saving folks from crystal knights, we need you guys here!

(worried) Oh dear, what is it?

Yeah, we will come if it’s a big problem.

It's a far bigger problem than you can imagine.
* his voice starts glitching again *
The queen knows of our hideout, we are moving to a different place to hide now.

“I need you guys here and now!”

TE:R
ADVENTURES
#1018
THE CHAOS DETOUR
(3/3)
TURTLEDOODLE1
SOHEKUN

THE CHAOS DETOUR (3/3)

Ever since the trio heard about what happened to their friends, they started their trip over to Town Mercia. G was especially shocked at the news. Bushra was... with them now? Even though he felt awful about the situation, a part of him was happy to reunite with his best friend. And with his powers back, he could protect his friends and family!

PotaTeo was excited to see his dad and sister again, not knowing the extent of their current situation. Array on the other hand... had complicated feelings. He was afraid to be in the middle of so many people again. The last time he tried that lifestyle, everything came crashing down. He was the most unsure out of the three.

A few hours had passed without the three uttering a single word. G was getting worried about… his friend. At least, that's what G thought he saw him as. Ever since they reunited, something was brewing inside of him. Something very unusual for G. He looked at Array and wanted to break the silence.

Hey.

Hey.

So... Array?

Yes, G?

I was thinking...
What do you plan on doing after we save the day?

Hm... you know?
I never really thought of that.
I am used to living in the “now”, rather than the “future”.

Hm... I see.

Yeah, sorry if the answer was a bit vague.

No, no, I understand perfectly.
It’s just...
* holds his left arm *
I was thinking about... us.

“Us”?

* looks away in embarrassment *
Y- yeah... us.
I know it might be a bit stupid to think so far ahead but... it’s just been in my mind for a bit.

Hm... I’m not sure, G.
* holds his hat from embarrassment *
I never thought you would ask such a thing.
Maybe... just maybe we could-

Hold on.

G notices a place in the distance and squints his eyes to focus on it.
It wasn’t Town Mercia but it was somewhere he has been to before.

Both G and Array did, in fact. At first, G thought his eyes were playing tricks on him but after a while, he realized it was the real deal. That temple was unmistakable.

I-Is that-

Yup.
We have arrived at Village Low.

G and Array couldn’t help but be in awe. It was right there. The last place they had fun together before everything went for the worst. It was a bizarre experience.

Woah...

It seems like a lifetime ago, doesn’t it?

Sure does.

The two decided to check inside the village without saying a single thing. It was abandoned, much like Town Unda. Except there weren’t mushrooms everywhere. Array picked up PotaTeo and wanted to show him what was around them too.

Temple Tutsu was standing strong as ever. It was essentially the only thing that remained unchanged since they last came here.

After walking a bit, they noticed a big hole next to one of the houses. It looked like something crash landed on here with force.

How strange...
* looks at the houses around them *
There aren’t any crystal knights around here.

Nor people.

Yeah...

Well, maybe they haven't come here yet.

Perhaps but it feels strange.
* crouches and puts his hand on the ground *
You would think there would have been villagers greeting us like last time.
But there is... no one.

That you know of.

The trio went to their fighting stance in panic. The mysterious voice scared them more than they would have liked to admit. They looked around and saw a figure standing next to a nearby house, being obscured by the house’s shadow.

S-show yourself!

Relax, kids.
It’s just me.

The figure walks out of the shadows to reveal...

W-what...
* drops his hammer in shock *
Mr. Carlos?!

Precisely.
* chuckles *
Hello there, G and Array.

The two were shocked to see Carlos of all people again. They didn't know how to react, especially Array. Due to his... troubling past with Carlos.

* waves at Carlos *
H-hi Mr. Carlos.

...hello, Array.

I-I'm sorry for what went down that day, Mr. Carlos.
I was just... a stupid dumb kid.
A stupid dumb kid who thought stealing from a village with nice people was a good idea!
So... I would like to apologize for everything that happened that day.

Hm... didn't expect you to apologize this quickly.
* looks at the ground *
It seems a bit half-hearted though.
* shrugs *
Not that I mind.

PotaTeo didn't understand what was going on but decided to roll with it for now.

I… see.

Oh yeah, speaking of... what are you doing here?
* points around him *

And where is everyone?

Can’t I just stay at my home village even when the apocalypse is happening?

Um... yeah, you could.
* looks away in shame *
Sorry.

Hm...

Carlos raises his hand and tells them to follow him.

Come now children, there’s much to discuss.

Meanwhile, a dark force was haunting the nearby forest. And by “dark”, they meant the red kind. After wasting a lot of his energy on the battle with the Crystal Queen, he has been desperately looking for another power source. When he escaped from the Rascals and Team Bushra, he could only sustain his need for power by taking the life source of every creature he encountered. He even turned some of them into his beasts as a bonus. But now? He was running out of energy to harvest. So, he had to try his chance at another temple, this time being the temple to connect them all; Temple Tutsu!

So... where are we going exactly?

Patience, young man.

* sighs *
Okay...

* lightly taps Array’s shoulder *
You doing okay, thunder boy?
Something in your mind?

I’m not entirely sure.
* looks at Carlos *
I just feel like he’s... angry at me?
Perhaps he’s hiding something from us?
I really don’t know.
* sighs again *
I just want to make amends with him... somehow.

I get that, Array.
Just... give it time maybe?
* looks over to PotaTeo *
You said the same to me, remember?

Yeah, you are right.

The two smiled at each other and then looked over to Carlos.

So uh...
* pretends to act like nothing happened *
Can we at least ask some questions on our way there?

Sure thing.

So... where is everyone?

When we learned the news of the Crystal Queen, everyone

evacuated the village... except me.

How come?

* looks at Array with an angry expression *
I already told you, didn't I?

Yes, you did but that doesn't excuse you from-

Array notices G telling him to shush for now.

I mean… sorry, please go on.

Hmpf.
* hits the ground with his cane *
Like I said, not one crystal knight can take me away from my birthplace!
* looks at the two *
Is that understood?

Array wanted to respond to him so badly but G wanted him to keep calm. Without getting a response, Carlos continued showing them the way. Array started to feel even worse about the situation and looked at his gauntlet in shame. He looked at G and whispered.

Yeah, I don't think he likes me very much.

* whispers back *
Yeah, I can tell.

It’s not nice to talk behind an old man’s back, little ones.

Shoot-

S-sorry!

Carlos didn’t pay attention to their apology and instead, looked at their potato friend.

Hm... so you must be PotaTeo, huh?

* gives him a thumbs up *

You seem like a nice kid.

Wait... how do you know his name?

I will explain in due time.
But right now, I’m talking with your potato friend.
* turns his back *
If you mind.

Array couldn’t take this treatment anymore. He crossed his arms and started walking in the opposite direction. G held Array’s hand to stop him.

H-hey, where are you going Array?
Don’t go!

And stay more time with this douche?
No, thanks!

Please!

Screw wanting to make amends with him!
* raises his hands *
He clearly hates me!
* silently points at Carlos *
Just look at his smug attitude!
He’s just like everyone else!

At least... stay for us!

Array was hesitant but knew he didn’t want to back away from G and their relationship. Not when they were this close.

* sighs *
Yeah, you are right... again.
I’m sorry for losing my cool like that, G.

I-It’s okay, I will make sure he doesn’t act like that towards you ever again.

* smiles *
Thanks, bun bun.

* holds his hand *
Anything for you, thunder boy.

The two caught up with Carlos and PotaTeo. It seemed like they didn’t even notice their absence.

...hm, I see.
I’m sure your friends will get you to your father soon.
* looks back at the two *
So... you two ready?

Ready?
For what?

Carlos stops in front of a house, presumably owned by Carlos himself. Carlos opens the door and tells them to follow behind him. Once they entered the house, they saw someone with a patient outfit lying down on a bed with a bunch of electronics wired onto him... G couldn’t believe it.

Is that...

SARPO?!

Ssshh!

Carlos hits G’s head with his cane.

OW!
* holding his head *
What was that for?!

You are going to disturb him in his “sleep”.
* sighs *
Just keep quiet.

O-Okay!

The four of them sit down on the chairs and look at the heavily injured Sarpo. There was blood all over his shirt and cybernetics.

I-I can’t believe this!
What happened to him?!

I am not sure either.

So... is this Sarpo?

* gives him a thumbs up *

Ooh... alright.
* squints his eyes *
I thought he would have looked differently.
Dunno why though.

G was still mumbling to himself like a crazy person.

How, where, why-

Carlos prepares to hit him again with the cane and G suddenly zips his mouth shut. He didn’t want to get hit by an old man again... not in front of Array too, no less.

It all started a week ago.
I was alone in the village, minding my business until I heard the sound of something crash landing nearby!

I rushed in to see what was up only to find... my old intern.

But that makes no sense...
* points at the window *
He was supposed to be an inside agent in the Crystal Kingdom with Ms. Meow… unless…

Oh dear...

He must have escaped somehow... but why for?
* looks at Carlos *
Also wait.
“Intern”? So does that mean...

Yes, G.
I was once MPC’s leader.

G does a shocked face while Array and PotaTeo didn’t understand what the big deal was.

That was before I retired anyways.

Wait, so did you retire before we showed up here?
I’m so lost...

Yes, I figured my time on the battlefield was no longer needed.
* looks at Sarpo and sighs *
So I gave the role to my number 1 student, only for him to end up looking like... this.

No one dared saying a word when Carlos was grieving. He looked like he really regretted his choice.

I gave him the burden of an entire organization at such a young age.
And before I knew it, the Travelers left MPC for good.
* picks up his robotic arm *
Including the one he cared about the most.

I’m... really sorry to hear that, Mr. Carlos.

Yeah.
* stands up *
Even though things went south with the original MPC...
* looks at PotaTeo *
Me, Teo and so many others are continuing the legacy!

* raises his eyebrow *
You?
Continue the legacy?
Since when?

S-since we took down Xtress.
(I thought that was widely known at this point.)

Xtress... right.
* chuckles *
Peh.
The all powerful, ancient sorcerer.

Yeah, that’s the guy.
Ever since then, we have been proud members of MPC2!

I’m sorry, what did you just say?

…MPC2?

That’s a horrible name, who decided to name it that?

G nervously pointed at the man lying on the bed.

...oh, that explains it.
* giggles in pity *
I always told him he was terrible at naming things.
Heh...

G didn’t really know what to respond with. The man who was once the leader of the greatest organization on the planet was now on the verge of crying. Array wanted to comfort him to the best of his ability.

I’m so sorry, Mr. Carlos.
We will help you to the best of our ability.

I appreciate the thoughts, kids.
I really do.
* cleans his eyes *
I have been trying to heal him for the past week and even though there’s progress, he still hasn’t woken up.
He has been repeating you guys’ names for a few days now.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Hence how I know of your name.

Woah... fascinating.

But... why?

Pardon?

You said you didn’t want to leave your birthplace but you left the village while I was held captive!

Hm... funny you mentioned that.
* stands up *
I left the village because Hood’s dastardly hoodsters were looking for me!
I couldn’t risk anyone’s lives.

But you could have told them!

I thought if I left without a trace, the hoodsters wouldn’t bother with this place!
Turns out...
* sighs *
I was wrong.

It’s fine to make mistakes, sir.
Believe me, I-

Array puts his hands on Carlos’ shoulders to comfort him, only for Carlos to swat him away.

Don’t. Touch. Me.

...sorry.

Hey, can you stop acting all mean towards him?

Eh?

You say you don’t hold grudges but you still keep acting like a jerk towards Array!
It’s like you see him as a mistake!

THAT’S BECAUSE HE IS!

WHAT?!
* gets up *
Okay mister, I have been trying to act nice to you since we arrived here but that does it!
I know what I did was wrong but why are you still acting this way to me?!

Don’t you see?
* points at the gauntlet *
I could have just let the townsfolk take their revenge on you but instead, I proposed a short jail time!
* grinds his teeth *
But instead of thanking me, you put on this… prohibited tech on your hand and joined the hoodsters!

I-

Hold on a second!
How do you know that?!

Because I saw him on a mission, genociding a whole town with other hoodsters!
* looks at Array *
Isn’t that right?!

Array couldn’t say anything. Carlos was right about all of those things. All the times he tried to suppress his memories had finally come to bite him. Array couldn’t help but let out his frustrations.

Fine, maybe I DID do all of those things!
* looks at his friends *
But I have changed for the better!

How can we be so sure you are not gonna betray your so-called “friends”?
Or heck, join Hood’s side again?

Well, what if he didn’t!

You can’t know that!
Please try to understand my concerns as well!

I do... I just...
* covers his face *
I don’t want to be reminded of my past anymore...

Array couldn’t help but break into tears. Both G and Carlos looked at each other with frustration.

Look at what you did!
You are not a wise guy at all!
I thought you were a more caring person!

You say I’m not one?!
You should be questioning your own morality, hanging out with this traitor!

PotaTeo was trying to comfort Array while the argument was getting more and more heated.

Like Array said, he has changed since then but you don’t know because you can’t move on!

He and all those hoodsters killed so many innocent people regardless if they wanted it or not!
I can’t just brush that aside!

Well...
* points at Carlos *
You are just a big jerk!

And you are just an irresponsible kid!

P…please...

Everyone suddenly stopped making a sound and all looked at the bed. Sarpo was talking in his “sleep” again.

Please… stop...
Cloe... I’m sorry...

And then, Sarpo stopped. Carlos quickly checked up if his heart was still beating or not and thankfully, it was. He took a deep breath and looked at the three kids in front of him.

I... would like to apologize.
I went a bit too far there.

G and Array were both surprised by this. They were expecting something passive aggressive from him instead.

You... alright, Mr. Carlos?

No... I’m not.
* slams his fist to the table *
Everything was just so overwhelming for a split second, I didn’t act rationally.

Sir…

Don’t try to talk me out of it.
I know my mistake-

Mr. Carlos.

Everyone looked at Array in unison.

I will just tell you this one more time.
* takes a breath *
I really am sorry for all my bad actions in the past.
I just wanted to be happy... just like the rest of you but I picked the wrong way to do it.
* holds G’s hand *
But ever since I saw G again, I felt... complete.
I felt like myself again and stopped doing those awful things.
He put me back on the right path.

Carlos smiled.

So please...
* reaches out his hand *
Can we have a new fresh start?

Hm...

Carlos looks around his house. It had been such a long time since he welcomed these two in here... Even though he didn't want to believe it, the kid seemed... genuine. He sighed and looked at Array in the eyes.

Of course...
* shakes his hand *
I apologize for my tantrum as well, things have been... tough since I left my MPC duties.

It's fine, sir.
Sarpo took good care of the whole organization in your absence.
* points at himself *
Heck, if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here right now.

* chuckles *
Yeah... you might be right.

Suddenly, they all heard sounds of destruction outside. G readied his hammer and left the house. He looked around to see what was causing mayhem, his jaw dropped when he realized who was behind it.

It was Xtress, trying to absorb the temple's powers for himself with a few mutant beasts around him. The beasts were quick to notice G's presence.

THE REPTILE!

ACK!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!

I could ask the same to you, punk!

G?!
What’s going on, what are you-

Array also notices Xtress and screams like a little girl in response.

EEK!

OH GREAT, THE OTHER ONE IS HERE TOO...

Xtress looked at his army and pointed at the two worried teenage boys.

ATTACK!
SHOW THEM NO MERCY!

As a response, G and Array went to their fight stances. It was showtime.

Are you ready for this?

Only always!
* spit to the ground *
Let’s do it!

You said it!

Xtress sent out a group of mutants to take down the two and they jumped away from the group to avoid their charge attack.

Too predictable.

* blocks an oncoming attack *
Hey, let’s not get cocky now-

* chuckles *
Yeah, yeah, you are right.

Xtress was getting frustrated with the two all over again. He wasn’t going to allow them to beat him again.

Behind you!

* punches a beast at the last second *
Thanks, G!

No problemo!

But surprising both of them, fighting against these mutants was surprisingly easier than they thought. Their attacks were synchronized to the point that they covered each others' blind spots. Their bond was something special.

* hits the last beast with his hammer *
BOOYAH!

We did it!

GRRRR-

What on Perdiah is going on here?!

Carlos looks around with PotaTeo and sees Xtress.

You?!

Calm down, Mr. Carlos!
We can handle him if we play our cards right!

HANDLE ME?

Xtress stomps on the ground as a small earthquake happens under them.

YOU ARE BENEATH ME!

G sent a whirlwind at Xtress but he disappeared and then appeared in front of it.

Shoot.

I got this!

Array jumps in the sky and hits the ground really hard to trip Xtress. Unfortunately for Array, Xtress was prepared for it. He teleported like always. However, Xtress knew he could only pull that move over and over again for so long. He appeared behind Array and slapped him to the side.

ARRAY!

HAHAHAHAHA!

Suddenly, Xtress got hit on the face by none other than his son, PotaTeo.

UGH!
* holds his face *
WHO DID THAT?!

Xtress looked around for who was responsible and saw PotaTeo beckoning him.

YOU... YOU WRETCHED FAILURE!
I WILL MAKE YOU PAY FOR BETRAYING ME!

Array!
* helps him get up *
Are you okay?!

Y- yeah.
* holding his head *
I will be fine.

Array notices PotaTeo fighting against Xtress, 1v1 style. He was putting up a great fight against the almighty sorcerer.

Woah.

WOO!
You go, Teo!

Xtress was starting to lose himself. He knew they were tired but so was he. He had to do something drastic. Maybe if he could lend himself a vessel for a bit...

Xtress raised his right hand and pointed it towards PotaTeo. G and Carlos didn't know what was going on but Array knew. He saw PotaTeo's colors changing to a shade of red. He couldn't allow this happen. He started running towards Xtress and PotaTeo, much to G's shock.

Array?!
What are you doing?!

Array looked back at G one more time in sadness before jumping in front of PotaTeo and making him wear the necklace instead.

Suddenly, a bright red light covered the whole village. When PotaTeo opened his eyes, he realized he was perfectly fine. But the body lying in front of him was different... something evil was now inhabiting it.

WELL… THIS WASN'T THE VESSEL I WAS EXPECTING TO USE...
* chuckles *
BUT I WON'T COMPLAIN!

G and Carlos were shocked. They couldn't believe what they were seeing. G's worst nightmares have come true.

"Array" slapped PotaTeo towards the two and continued absorbing the temple's powers, knowing fully well that they won't be able to hurt him now.

You...
* summons his hammer *
YOU GIVE ARRAY BACK!

G rushed in to save Array but Xtress was anticipating his emotional outburst.

PATHETIC...

As G was about to hit him, "Array" hit him on the chest with the gauntlet, launching him to the air.

CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT AGAIN, REPTILE!

As G was falling to the ground, he couldn't feel anything. He was hurt physically, yes but he was hurt more emotionally because he

never got to tell him about his feelings...

Thankfully, PotaTeo caught him just in time. He was struggling to breathe.

G?!
* checking his heart rates *
Are you alright, boy?

Array...

Carlos looked at “Array” with fear. They have lost... but G wasn’t satisfied.

N-no...

G tried getting up and summoned back his hammer. He wasn’t going to back down now.

G… don’t do this!
You are going to get yourself killed if you keep pushing yourself like this!

I know.
* cracks his knuckles *
But it’s worth it... for him.

G readied his hammer and looked at “Array” with anger.

I will take down Xtress and save Array.
Even if I die trying!
* points at Carlos *
You go take care of Sarpo!

* sighs *
Understood.
Good luck.

Thank you.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Teo, I need you for something.
Will you help me?

PotaTeo gave him a thumbs up and G responded with a smile. They were teaming up again, just like the olden days. G spins his hammer around like never before and sends a giant whirlwind towards “Array”.

WHAT-

“Array” didn’t realize it until the last second and partially blocked G’s attack, causing him to get launched away from the temple.

IMPOSSIBLE!
YOU ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO HURT ARRAY!
* points at G *
YOU… CAN’T HURT ARRAY!
YOU LOVE HIM!

...I do.
* spits to the ground *
And I’m going to save him because of that same love.

GRRR!

“Array” sends a fireball towards G but PotaTeo blocks it with his body at the last second.

YOU STUPID POTATO!

He sends another one towards G and this time, he spins around his hammer and redirects the fireball towards “Array”. He blocks it with his gauntlet only to realize this was a trap.

Suddenly, “Array” felt his hands being held by something, only to find out it was PotaTeo holding him in place.

W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

“Array” tried teleporting but he didn’t absorb enough energy to do so.

NO, NO!
I WON’T GO DOWN LIKE THIS!

He saw G rushing towards him with his hammer at hand and prepared for a devastating blow.

But G refused to do so. “Array” smiled, G was still weak as before.

PFFT! PATHETIC!
EVEN WHEN YOU ARE AT AN ADVANTEGOUS POSITION,
YOU CAN’T DO IT!

I know...
* smiles *
But I know I can reach him!

G sits down with his legs crossed and hugs “Array”, much to his surprise.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
LET ME GO!

I know you are in there, Array...
Please, you can do this!

I WON’T GO DOWN LIKE THIS!
* tries to attack the two *
I WON’T...

I…

STOP IT NOW!

I LOVE YOU!

Suddenly, his eyes and body turned back to normal as a ghostly spirit left his body. G knew from last time that this wasn’t going to be their last encounter. PotaTeo let him go afterwards and hopped next to G. G was looking at Array’s unconscious body with fear in his eyes.

A-Array?
* shakes his body *
Oh please...

No response.

Array, please!

* hugs him *
Not again... not like this, please!

Hngrh...
* opens his eyes *
G?

ARRAY?!

G looked at Array in happiness. He was relieved beyond belief.

Thank goodness, you are okay.
* smiles *
I knew you would win against him, thunder boy!

He he, yeah!
I have some experience with “possessions” after all.
* coughs *
Say, what did you mean by-

But then, it happened. It was all so sudden that Array couldn’t process what was happening. G... kissed him on the lips? It happened, just like that. Array couldn’t believe what was happening. Was he still in a dream? Or something worse... a nightmare? Right now though, he could care less.

I-I don’t understand!
I-I thought-

…that I didn’t love you?
Silly thunder boy, of course I loved you!
* holds his hand *
From the very start, even.

I-I can’t believe this is actually happening.
Are we-

Yes, Array.
* holds his face *
We are together now.
And that’s all that matters.

G noticed Array’s eyes sparkling from happiness. He was waiting for this day his whole life. After a bit of smooching, they heard a few folks quietly clapping behind them. Carlos and PotaTeo were there of course but there was someone else standing next to them, Sarpo.

Sarpo?!

Congrats, G.
I’m so proud of you.
* looks at Carlos *
And thank you so much for taking care of me, master.
I owe you so much.

Please don’t mention it, kiddo.
* shakes his hand *
Please tell Cloe I said “hi” if you talk to her again, alright.

* sighs *
Will do.

G and Array, while holding hands, rushed in to greet Sarpo. It was so surreal seeing him here.

Heya G, Teo and...

It’s Array, Mr...?

Fields.
Sarpo Fields.

The four of them hugged and looked at the lone Carlos watching them.

I’m not usually part of group hugs.
So please don’t mind me.

* chuckles *
If you say so, master.

And so, an unbreakable love was formed and an old ally was found. Even though the group knew they had to face evil forces like Xtress, Hood and Maizie again, they were grateful to have each other in these trying times.

A few hours later;

While the trio were preparing to leave the village for good, Sarpo wanted to have a talk with his old master.

Sir?

Huh?

Can I have a moment of your time?

O-of course, Sarpo.
* sits down *
What is it?

I don’t remember what happened in the past few days.
The last thing I could recall was flying away from the castle.
* sighs *
So tell me, did... Did Cloe also escape?

Carlos sighed and shook his head in disapproval. Sarpo looked at the ground with a sad expression.

I... see.
I just wanted to know.

It’s fine, kid.
I know how much she means to you.
I’m sure you can save her soon.

I wish I was as positive as you are, sir.

Sarpo looked at the trio packing up their stuff and then quickly looked back at Carlos again.

But yeah...
As much as I would love to stay with you, master… we need to get a move on.
Who knows what evil woman did to our world while I was unconscious-

I understand.

But sir, you didn’t let me finish.

Oh?

I was going to ask you for another thing...
Can you... come with us?
We might need your intellect against the tough battle ahead of us.

I’m sorry Sarpo, I respect you wholeheartedly but no.
* points around the village *
My place is here.
I need to start rebuilding this place to protect our legacy.

B-but-

And you didn’t let me finish either, lad.

... you are right, I’m sorry.

All good.
As I was saying, I will be fine, don’t you worry.
* chuckles *
No amount of Crystal Knights can take care of your old man.

Hm...

If that’s what you decided on... I can’t talk you out of it, sir.
* smiles *
I have spent enough time as your protégé to know that.

* smiles back *
I appreciate the sentiment.
* points at the trio *
Now... get a move on with your friends.
You need to stop this madness before it’s too late.

We will... (hopefully.)

Even though Sarpo didn’t like his thought process, he still respected his old master’s choice nonetheless.

And so, the newfound quartet waved goodbye at Carlos as they slowly left the remains of the village. They were now on their way to find their other friends and finally stop the Crystal Queen once and for all!

A few nights before the trio arrived at Village Low...

It was a rather peaceful night. Cloe was looking outside from her room’s balcony. She spent way more just by herself ever since they stopped hearing from Terry and Lydia. But most importantly, she had been thinking about... him.

A few days ago, Maizie told her that Sarpo died from their battle. And even if he escaped, he would have died regardless. Maizie also told her to not worry about it. She referred to him as “dead weight”. If they found Unit SRP... there wouldn’t be any need for Sarpo anymore... but then, why did she feel this way? The Queen wasn’t doing the best but she was still overjoyed after telling Cloe the news.

But deep down, Cloe didn’t believe that. Somehow, she felt that he was alive. But regardless of the circumstances, Cloe missed the love of her life so much. Even though they betrayed their queen; a part of her wished he was also here with her, crystallized or not.

She noticed a shooting star in the night sky and wished:

“I hope you are out there, hon. I miss you...”

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
DOUBLE JOYCE
TURTLEDOODLE1
SOHEKUN

CHAPTER 35: DOUBLE JOYCE

It was a special day on Planet Perdiah. The Rascals were having the time of their lives, driving on a new type of vehicle Perdiah has never seen before! A hover bike!

A few days ago, Markus told Murray to come up with a new vehicle design specifically for the three of them. It took a few attempts for Murray to come up with the perfect design but he eventually came up with one! A 3-part hover bike that each of them could control that could also split into three smaller ones. The main part of the bike took priority otherwise. Markus loved how it looked when Murray was done with it. He named it “The Troubling Sky”. Because it floated slightly above the ground, it was very creative.

Murray was driving the main part of The Troubling Sky, Markus was looking at the diamond they stole in awe and “Joyce” was having so much fun joking with the other two. Even with this fake persona, the other two were so caring and nice that she started feeling like she was “Joyce” from the very beginning. After so many years of loneliness, she finally felt like she had a place she belonged to.

You want to hear a joke, Murray?
This one’s about tarantulas!

Not right now, Joyce.
Sorry.

Aw...
I-I mean-
Darn it!
* turns her back to Murray *
(Gah, keep it together, Mari!)
(One wrong move and you are toast!)

Hm...
* focuses on the road *
Can you ask the boss where we are headed?

S-sure!
* looks back at Murray *
You keep your eye on the road and stay safe!

Will do.

Joyce leans over to her left and waves at Markus with a smile on her face. Markus chuckled back.

Hey boss, where are we going exactly?

Well, I was thinking of finding another one of those temples!

Oooh...

Yeah, you can get those heels you want too when we find that stinkin’ place.

Sounds lovely!

Yeah...

Joyce put her hands on the back of her head and smiled. Today was a great day.

Suddenly however, Joyce noticed something strange above them. It looked like… raining potions?!

What the...

And just as she feared, a barrage of potions fell in front of The Troubling Sky as Murray stopped it at the last second. There was a wall of fire in front of them, stopping them from making any progress. As the trio looked around themselves all confused, they saw a small car with a familiar looking figure stopping in front of them.

I don’t know who you are but you better move out of our way!
You don’t want to mess with the Rascals!

Yeah!

Before the figure on top of the car could reply however, two figures got out of the car first.

* coughs *
Man, that fire potion made me sick.
I think I’m gonna throw up.

* holding his chest *
Same bro, same.

Sigh... you two stay inside the car.

The figure sighed and jumped in front of the Rascals. It was…

Joyce?!

Ah finally found ya', faker!

Markus and Murray looked at the two Joyce(s) in shock. What on Perdiah was happening?! While the other two were confused, Marigold was terrified. Her worst nightmares were coming to fruition.

F-Faker?!
Impossible!

Oh, don't give me that!
You know what you did!
* points at "Joyce" *
Markus, Murray, that girl's a fake!
She trapped me inside that pocket zone thing and left me there to rot!

Yeah, I can confirm.

Yep, yep.
She explained the whole thing to us.
* lightly waves at the three *
Also hi, we are her big brothers.
Nice to meet you too!
I'm Don and my brother here is called Hat-

B- but Joyce has a hat!
You don't have one!

Ya' stupid idiot!

She stole my hat before leaving me there!
She’s been pretending to be me this whole time!

She’s lying!
* points at Joyce *
That’s the witch who attacked me!
Those two next to her must be her henchmen!

Oh wow, okay.

Uncool, dude.

Oh, so we're just lying now, eh?

While the two Joyce(s) continued throwing insults at each other, both Markus and Murray were trying to make sense of it all. Murray thought the Joyce in front of him was the real deal, she got the exact mannerisms he expected from her. Not to mention, she had her accent. Meanwhile, Markus was on the side of the Joyce standing next to them; mostly because he didn’t remember Joyce ever mentioning having brothers before.

Fine, if y'all are not going to believe me, ah will prove to ya’ all by FORCE!
* points at her brothers *
Don, Hattie, give me those strength potions again!
Ah think Super Joyce will be able to take down that ugly witch.

(Super Joyce, really?)
(Is that what she settled on?)

(I really thought she was gonna call herself Reverse Joyce.)
(Talk about a missed opportunity…)

...ehem.
Can ya' two hurry it up?

Sorry, sis!

The trio watched as the Folio Bros. threw a bunch of at Joyce, unleashing... nothing.

Huh, what happened?
* looks at her arms *
Why didn't ah turn into Super Joyce?

We don't have more strength potions for you to become "super".

Yeah, sorry sis.

Sigh, fine.
* looks at her fake copy *
We will just have to deal with this the old fashioned way then.

Joyce, what is she talking about?

I'm telling you!
That's the awful witch I told you about!

She must have come back for revenge!

But... What about her mannerisms, “Joyce”?

Mannerisms?

She seems rude, brash and most importantly, egotistical to the next level.
She seems much more in character... compared to you!

I-I-

Joyce rushes in to attack “Joyce” before she could respond. The real Joyce shouted at her brothers before starting the fight.

GAH!
GET OFF OF ME!

Don, Hattie!
You two distract Markus and Murray until I’m done with this freak!

Joyce!

W-wait, how are we-

The two looked in front of them to see Markus and Murray about to attack them.

Uh... we come in peace?

* dodges her punch *
H-how did you escape?!

By outsmarting the system, ya' witch!
* dodges her cards disguised as potions *
Alongside sheer determination fueled by my hatred towards ya'!

You are crazy!

Tell me something I don't know!
* smiles *
Can't believe you spent years there when I got out in less than a week!

S-Shut up!
* throws a potion at her *
You don't know what I have been through!

Joyce dodges the potion and looks at the angry Marigold. She was starting to shapeshift back to her usual self.

I lost my mom and dad, my little brother and everything!

And ah'm supposed to care because..?

Marigold did a spinning card attack in response as Joyce dodged at

the last second.

Woah!
That’s a new one.

I finally had friends after so long and you are trying to take that away from me!

They didn’t belong to ya’ in the first place!

And you don’t deserve them either!

Marigold pulled out a card with fire signs on it as a circle of fire covered the arena they were fighting in. Knowing that no one outside would see them, Marigold transformed to her true self.

With them by my side, I finally felt... at home!
* pulls out another set of cards *
Markus and Murray are both great people and you WASTE them with your ignorance!

Yeah, yeah, ya’ said these back at the swamp too!

* flaps her arms around *
TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY, YOU JERK!

Marigold threw a poison card towards Joyce but she hopped backwards to dodge it.

Sorry pardner but ah fight a lot of people with deep and sad stories!
You are not so special as ya' think ya' are!

ENOUGH!

Marigold clapped her hands together as the two cards she was holding combined. The ground suddenly started sucking Joyce into it like a swamp, much to Joyce's shock. Despite her attempts at getting out, Marigold' powers were too strong!

Suffocating you inside the ground is what you deserve, you selfish prick!

Joyce was struggling to get out. She was trying to reach out to her pockets for a potion but the swamp was making it hard for her to do that. Not to mention, she was getting more and more sucked into the swamp as time went on. She watched as Marigold took a step back and slowly started transforming to her again.

With you gone, I'll be Joyce 'till the end of time!
And then I'll continue being happy!

(Oh phooey.)

D-don't hurt me, please!

Don was begging for mercy as he dodged an arrow coming from his sides.

EEK!

Sorry kiddo but we can’t trust you!

Don was running around, dodging Markus’ arrows while Hattie was stuck in a corner with Murray slowly walking towards him.

D-don’t come any closer!
* does a karate pose *
I’m warning you, I know karate... from my middle school days!
It might look like I’m weak but I assure you, you don’t want to-

Calm down, I just want to-

GAH!

Hattie quickly threw a potion at Murray and covered his face in fear.
Instead of hurting Murray however, it just healed him.

Look.
* wipes off the potion from his face *
I really don’t want to hurt you, trust me.
I don’t like hurting others too.
* reaches out his hand *
I just want to find out what is going on here!

Y-You really mean it?

Sure do.
Why would I be lying?

I-I’m not sure but...

* shakes Murray's hand *
I'm glad we are on the same page.
* takes a sigh of relief *
Thank goodness, I thought things were going to get serious for a second.
* smiles *
The name's Hattie Folio.
Nice to meet you.

Likewise.
My name's Murray by the way.

Ooh, fancy!
I like how your name sounds!

* smiles *
Thanks, you seem nice.

Murray looks around for Markus and sees him holding Don by his lab coat, about to punch him on the face again.

Woah, woah, calm down boss!
We came to an agreement!

What?
* points at him *
Are you sure you're not mind controlled or something?

No, no!
Please let him go.

Hm...
* looks at Don’s messed up face, still begging for mercy *
Alright then.

Markus dropped Don to the ground as he tried to catch his breath.

DON!
* rushes towards Hattie to help *
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?!

Pfft... that was nothing.
* holds his black eye *
I could have beaten him...

No, you wouldn’t have.

Sigh, you are right.
Who am I kidding?!
* coughs *
That was painful.

Don’t worry bro, I will heal you up real quick!

Thanks, bro.

So what did you tell them, Murray?

I just told them to explain what happened and Hattie said he would.

Are you sure they are gonna tell the truth?

I’m unsure but it’s the best option we got.
I don’t want to blindly attack anyone!

Hm... not the first thing I would have done but I gotta say, that was clever thinking on your part, Murray.

* nervously smiles *
Thanks boss.

You should be fine soon, Don.

Thanks, bro.
I owe you one.

You actually owe me more than once but I will let it slide this time.

The two chuckled as Murray lightly touched Hattie’s shoulder to get his attention.

If you guys are done... Can you tell us what exactly happened, Hattie?
* points at the arena covered with fire *
What is up with Joyce...(s)?

Yeah and which is the real one?
* puts his hand on chin *
I still think it’s the one with the hat!

Allow me to explain from the very beginning!

Any last words, freak?

…

That’s what I thought!

Marigold's transformation to “Joyce” was complete. She looked at the pathetic looking girl trying to not drown and grinned.

Once I’m out of here, I will tell Markus and Murray to take out your siblings!
That way, no one will know what happened and I will be the TRUE Joyce!

Ya’ think ya’ will be happy once we are gone?
* trying to climb up *
Then what?
Ya’ think they will just continue to believe you are me?

Y-Yes!
* shrugs *
What else can happen?

Oh, you wouldn’t even dream of it.
Let’s just say... What if those two found out about ya’ little trickery?
Then what?

N-no, stop it!
* grits her teeth *
I know they will never betray me if I continue being... you!

That’s a nice theory, witch.
But I gotta say, ya’ should know that...
* smiles *
Ya’ talk a lot.

Suddenly, Joyce pops out of the ground with a half full potion on her hand.

How did you-

You thought ah only made potions similar to mah brothers?
Tsch, tsch...
Ya’ silly goose!

GRR...
* raises her arms to summon more cards *
I BEAT YOU ONCE AND I CAN DO IT AGAIN!

In response to her attack, Joyce threw two potions at the ground and created a rock pillar in front of her to block the attack.

DON’T HIDE BEHIND THERE, COWARD!

YOU WEAKLING!

Nuh uh.
* readies another potion *
Ya’ fought me while I had no potions with me.
Besides, ah tried mah brothers’ way but since that doesn’t work, ah will go with the ol’ reliable!

Joyce threw 3 potions in the air and kicked all of them with her left leg towards Marigold. She created a shield made out of psychic energy to block the potions, only to get hit by Joyce’s raw punch to the face. Marigold was completely caught off guard by this attack as she dropped to the ground. She was frustrated beyond belief.

I WON’T LET IT END LIKE THIS!

Marigold materialized more cards from her hands and threw them all at Joyce. Joyce knew she couldn’t contest Marigold’s powerful cards so she just dodged them instead. Joyce could tell Marigold was slipping. Almost like her power was slowly depleting. Marigold didn’t want to waste energy while fighting so she transformed back to normal for the time being.

Ya’ are getting sloppy, witchy.
* does a ballerina move while dodging another card attack *
Ah would stand down if ah were you!

No... NEVER!
* clenched her fist *
I WILL KILL YOU AND THEN HAVE MY HAPPY ENDING!

Joyce expected an emotional outburst from her and therefore, managed to dodge Marigold’s powerful ground attack. But surprising Joyce herself, Marigold’s hair was slowly turning into a plain yellow one. It seems like her outburst had more effects on her than Joyce thought.

What the...

N-No!
* trying to hide her hair *
NOT NOW!

Taking advantage of Marigold's panicked state, Joyce quickly threw a potion at her face with Marigold getting hit by it. Marigold's eyes were now messed up, she couldn't see anywhere. The potion turned Marigold's hair back to the usual grey color.

W-where are you?!
* flips around *
COME OUT!

Marigold started throwing cards at random locations in panic. Joyce wanted to do the final blow but knew she could get hit by Marigold's mindless attacks.

S-STOP! PLEASE
I BEG OF YOU!
* continues throwing cards *
I don't want to be alone again!
I want to have fun with Markus and Murray again!
* covering her face *
I JUST WANT TO BE HAPPY!

In one of her attempts, a card hit a tree as an eye appeared on it. Marigold could now partially see through the tree now. She smiled and threw a card right towards Joyce. Unknown to her however, Joyce was also preparing a powerful potion during Marigold's monologue. She threw it at the card coming towards her, causing a huge explosion and launching Marigold out of the fiery arena. Now, everyone could see her true identity.

Oh no...

No way...

See?! I told you guys!

Woo-hoo!

Ugh...

Marigold cleared her eyes and looked around herself. She realized she wasn't "Joyce" anymore and backed away in panic.

N-No, I don't-
* looks at Markus and Murray *
Please, you have to understand-
* covers her face *
P-Please, don't hurt me!

Marigold's powers were at their weakest now. If she had more, she could teleport away but right now? She couldn't teleport her way out of this. She threw a card at them as a last resort but Joyce destroyed it at the last second with her potion. It was over for her.

Playing dirty, eh?
* cracks her knuckles *
Ya' want me to play dirty with ya' too?
Ya' aren't getting away with what ya' did to me!

While Joyce threatened the poor witch, all Markus and Murray could think of was the times they spent together with "Joyce". It really

didn’t matter in the end, did it? All those memories, the fun times... nothing.

Like ya said!
* readies her fist *
Any last words, punk?!

P-please...

Just what I thought!

But to everyone’s surprise, Murray was the first one to try to stop Joyce.

What are ya’ doing, Murray?
* waves her hand to the sides *
Move away!

L-Listen Joyce!
I always knew something was up with... “you” when you were gone but deep down, she seems like a good person!
I can’t let you hurt her.

Murray looked back at Marigold with sadness in his eyes. Marigold looked at him too but she couldn’t tell him anything in response. She was so ashamed of what happened.

Yeah!
Perhaps we could have two Joyce’s in the same team!
* snap his finger *
There could be four of us!

Yeah, sis.
I didn’t know this gal was hurt in the first place.
She seems like she had a troubled past.
* gently moves away Joyce’s hand *
Maybe we could show her a bit of mercy.

Perhaps we could even help her become a better person!

Marigold started smiling but couldn’t help but keep crying. She didn’t deserve their sympathy at all. Joyce looked at the 4 of them in disgust.

Ah can’t believe ya’ all!
* points at Marigold *
She left me in that dastardly mountain to rot!
Ah have no sympathy for freaks like her!

Joyce prepared to throw a potion at Marigold to finish the job, only for a familiar flying beast to attack her.

OW!
WHAT THE HECK?!

Joyce looked around and noticed that Loi was attacking her.

LOI?!

Loi hawked at Joyce and landed on Marigold’s shoulder.

You- you came back for me, Loi...

After seeing her old friend, Marigold felt… happy again. Even though

this was a complete bust, Loi still cared for her.

* scratches his head *
What on Perdiah is that crow doing here?

It’s the witch’s pet bird... it’s a long story.

From the happiness she felt after seeing Loi, Marigold regained a bit of her powers. Her hair started glowing shortly after.

W-What’s happening?!

* grits her teeth *
SOMEONE STOP HER BEFORE SHE-

And so, she used it to teleport away from the group with Loi, causing an explosion in her place. The five of them all get launched away from the area. And the two teleported somewhere... where no one could find them.

After a while, Markus got up and looked around. What even happened in the last few hours? It felt like his world flipped upside down. He saw Murray trying to get up while holding his back.

Ugh...
* sees Markus *
Boss... please help!

Markus rushed in to help. But before he could reach there however, he saw his comrade helping Murray get up.

J-Joyce?

Yeah, yeah.
* reaches out her hand *
Get up already, ya crybaby!

* grabs her hand *
Are you... actually “you”?

Joyce hit him on the shoulder as a response.

OW!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?!

Hope that answered ya’ question, bald freak!

Murray was both angry and happy at the same time. This was the Joyce he knew and hated! But at the same time... it didn’t feel right. Afterwards, Joyce walked over to the hat lying on the ground that Marigold left behind.

Ah will be taking what belongs to me now.

Joyce looked at her hat with a smile on her face. It had been such a long time since she wore this ol' thing. She donned her iconic hat and looked back at her still confused teammates.

Heya boss, been a bit, eh?

I-I still can’t believe you have been gone for so long.
And we didn’t even notice!

Actually... yeah, how did ya' freaks not realize it?!
She acted nothing like me!

Murray had some suspicions but I thought you inhaled some of that purple smoke.

Eh?

It's... also a long story.
* points behind Joyce *
Speaking of long stories...

Joyce turned her back and saw her brothers running towards them in worry.

Never knew you had such... interesting brothers, Joyce.

...crud.

Sis, are you okay?!

Are you hurt?!

Did you use healing potions on yourself?

Is there any collateral damage?!

Guys, ah’m fine.
* sighs and looks at Markus *
Yeah, you are right.
They are mah older twin brothers.

Twin brothers, eh?

* chuckles *
Older you say?

Can it, Murray!
* sighs *
But yeah... they are a real bunch, alright!

* holds her shoulder *
And she wouldn’t have it any other way, right?

Silence.

Um... right?

Joyce didn’t respond to them. Hattie and Don looked at each other in worry. She was more interested in the vehicle in front of them.

Ooh!
* points at The Troubling Sky *

What’s this hunk o’ junk?

* holding his head *
Something I invented a few days ago.
It’s our personal vehicle now!

I call it “The Troubling Sky”!

Oooh, sweet!
It’s not heels but this will still do!
* chuckles *
Can’t wait to ride on this bad boy!
* hits the side car with her foot *
And it seems tough too!

Yup, it has an excellent design.

* holds the back of his head from embarrassment *
Aww, don’t mention it guys...

Well then!
Now that ah have my ACTUAL life back...
* hops on the side car *
Let’s go make some mess, party boyz!

YEAH!

Wait… what about us, sis?

Yeah, are we coming too?

Hm...
* gives them a thumbs up *
Yeah, sure!
Ah just know just the place for ya' guys!

Cut to a few hours later as Joyce dropped off her brothers in front of Town Mercia.

There ya' guys, go!
Ya' can hang out with the goody two-shoes now!

W-wait!
Are you not coming?!

Can we at least hug for goodbye-

Bye bye!

The Rascals rode off to the sunset while Joyce's laughter could be heard all around the abandoned town. Don and Hattie looked at each other, confused.

Well... now what?

I don't know.
* hits the ground with his foot *

I can’t believe she sold us out like that!

H-hey-

She left us the second she got her crew back!

It sucks, I know but think about it this way.
She could have just left us there on our own if she didn’t care!
She brought us here to keep us safe!

I guess... we don’t know if this place is safe to begin with though.
There could be those weird crystal guys we saw...
* crosses his arms *
I still didn’t like how she acted.

Me neither but hey, what can you do?

We didn’t even get her phone number!

Don, the phone lines are all offline, you know that?

Yes but I wanted to have hers, just in case!

Yeah, that’s fair.
* looks towards the sunset *
I don’t want to lose track of our sister, again.

Same here, I already miss her a ton.

Suddenly the two noticed a bunch of people rushing towards them.

Are you two alright?!
We saw the Rascals with you!

W- we are fine, sir.

Thanks for asking.

* moves his glasses *
I think I remember you guys.

Come to think of it... yeah!
Are you guys-

From MPC2?
Yeah, we are.

Sweet!

Though I will let you all know that you are not safe around here anymore.
* reaches out his hand to the two *
Please come with us, we are leaving here soon for a safer place.

Alright then!

Sure!
If you need any help with potion making, we will be happy to be of service!

* appears behind Artender *
Oh sweet, you found more potion makers!

Her sudden appearance startled Artender.

H-How long were you behind me?

Since now.

Henna chuckled.

But yeah, I know these two will be a real help once we fight off against the Crystal Queen!

Hattie whispers to Don.

I think we are missing a lot of context here.

* whispers back *
Just play along for now.

Meanwhile, the Rascals were on their way for another quest. Joyce was enjoying a freshly made orange juice while the other two were

thinking about what had transpired.

Man, it is so nice to go back!
Right, boss?

* looking into the sky *
...yeah.

Ya’ still thinking about that witch?

A bit, yeah.

Me too, I wonder where she got off to.

Meh, ah don’t really care.
She could be rotting inside a cave for all ah care!

“That’s what she deserves for messing with the Rascals!”

Markus and Murray looked at each other in worry. Even though they were happy to have the real Joyce with them now, a part of them really missed Marigold’s presence, even if they didn’t realize it was her all along.

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
CATCH THE POTATO!
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K

CHAPTER 36: CATCH THE POTATO!

It had been a few days since G and others learned of Vengeful Rubies' situation. Ever since then, they haven't been able to contact Artender or the others. It was simply not possible. So, the group thought their best bet would be to go to Town Mercia. In the meantime, the group caught up on each others' lives.

And so, that's how I was able to escape from the Crystal Kingdom.

Woah...

I knew there was a reason they upped the security of that place earlier!

What about Cloe?

Sarpo sighs and looks away. G already knew the answer to his question.

Assuming she got caught after helping me escape... She's gone now. At least mentally.

Oh, Sarpo, I'm so sorry.

Yeah, we are truly sorry for what happened.
* grips G's hand *
I know the pain of staying apart from the person you love.

DAW!
...wait, you are talking about me, right?

Obviously, bun bun!

Thanks for your kind words, everyone.

Sarpo noticed PotaTeo jumping around him to cheer him up.

Thanks to you, Teo.
Don’t think I forgot about you!

PotaTeo clapped his hands in happiness.

So uh, do you guys know how much we have left?

Hm...
* pulls out the map *
According to this map, I think we can reach there in half an hour, tops.

Maybe I could boost into the sky and make sure we are going the right path-

N-no.
Carlos said your cybernetic parts were badly damaged.
It’s far too risky to try.

Yeah, take it from me.
* points at his gauntlet *
You don’t want to push your cybernetic parts too much.

I know, I know.
But Carlos told me I would get used to my cybernetic parts again in a few days.

Suddenly, Sarpo felt massive pain on his cybernetic leg as he tripped on to the ground. The two lovers rushed in to help him get up.

Sarpo, you are even struggling to walk, man!

Yeah, you should take it a bit easy.

Sarpo got up and looked at his cybernetic parts in shame. After years of getting used to them, it felt like he was at square one all over again. Worst of all, they still had more walking to do.

I will try walking on my own again, you two.

Are you sure?

I’m certain.
* lets their hands go *
Besides… Teo will help me in the worst scenario, right little guy?

PotaTeo gave Sarpo a thumbs up as the two started walking in front of the lovey dovey couple.

Well... I guess that’s that.
* puts his hands behind his head *
Interesting day, isn’t it?

Y-yeah.
* looks away *
It sure is.

You okay, thunder boy?
I feel something’s been on your mind ever since we woke up!

* chuckles *
You know me too well, bun bun.

Array sighs and looks back at G. He was the only one Array could tell his genuine feelings to.

I had a weird... dream last night. Or was it a nightmare?
I’m not sure myself.

And…?

I remember seeing a lady with a blinding gold light coming from behind her, covering her face in the process.
I couldn’t tell who she was but she seemed... familiar somehow.

Any clue on who she might be?

Hm...
* scratches his chin *
It couldn’t be any of my folks... or could it?

* raises his eyebrow *
What do you mean?

Oh, well.
* holds his arm in embarassment *
I-It was somoene very dear to me... someone who got lost a long time ago.

Lemme guess, it was a sibling?

W-WHAT?!
* covers his face in embarassment *
How did you know?!

I can tell just from the way you speak about “them”.

Welp.
* sighs *
You got me.
It was... my sister.

Huh, you never told me about her before.

At least... I remember having one.
She went missing while I was so young, I barely remember anything about her.
My family tried erasing any mention of her after her disappearance, to the point I forgot about her too... until now.

That’s so messed up!
Why would they do that?!

I’m... not sure.
Perhaps it was to keep me safe?
Who knows at this point...

G watches as Array moves his hand inside a small nearby river.

All I know is...
* grips his other fist *
I have to try to find her after we are done with this Queen Maizie thing.
I need to make amends.

Well...
* holds Array’s hand *
You won’t need to go on this journey on your own!
I got your back!

The two smiled back at each other. Ever since the two confessed feelings to each other, Array has been feeling much comfortable with himself around G. He didn’t want his recent dreams to annoy G but thankfully, he was as understanding as ever. When they were together, they felt like nothing bad could go wrong, even if it was just for a single moment.

After half an hour of walking, the quartet reached Town Mercia.

Unfortunately for them however, they weren't alone.

Woah...
Is that-

Ssshh!

Sarpo put his hand on G's mouth to shut him up as the crystal knights continued their search.

There isn't any sign of life around here, Ms. Spades.

Are you sure?

Yes, there seems to be no one around.

Should we go look for somewhere else?

No, Unit SRP's frequencies were last spotted around here.
They couldn't have gone too far away!
* points at her group of crystal knights *
Continue searching the area.
We are going to find those survivors no matter what!

The quartet watched as the crystal knights split into groups and continued their search.

Gosh dang it!
Now, what are we gonna do?!

I’m... not sure.

They already left and we are in dangerous territory now!
How on Perdiah are we supposed to find their new hideout...

Hm...

You are in that thinking pose again, Sarpo.
You thought of something?

Yeah, actually.
If I know Artender well, he must have left a clue on their whereabouts just in case we came back here.

So..?

So, we have to search around the place for a possible clue... just like them!

Well, that’s not very assuring.

Can’t we just beat these guys and then go look for clues?

They outnumber us heavily, it’s a deathwish.

Yeah... sounds about right.
* sits down *
But how on Perdiah are we supposed to search for clues when the town is overrun by crystal knights?!

Suddenly, they heard a crystal knight rushing towards Clara with excitement.

General!

What is it?

We found something that might interest you.

Yes, miss!
We found a passage to their secret hideout on a tree stump!

Oh!
That’s what I’m talking about!

Clara readies her sword for battle.

Call every crystal knight to that tree stump, we are going to invade their little freakshow and put an end to this!
They won't know what is about to hit them!

And so, every crystal knight grouped next to the tree stump as they used the slide one by one for the invasion. Now was as good a time as ever to look for clues.

Okay so once everyone is in, we are going inside the town for clues.
But we are NOT splitting up... not right now at least.

Everyone gave him a thumbs up as they all rushed inside the town. First, they checked the mayor's house but there was nothing of importance there. Then, they checked the nearby bar and there was nothing there either. Then G had the brilliant idea of checking Bushra's wrecked house filled with fish decorations. It's been a lifetime since G last came here. The quarted pushed against the wall to open it and then started looking around for clues. Judging by the lack of crystal pillars, it seemed like the crystal knights didn't investigate this place yet.

Did you guys find anything yet?

Nope.

Me neither.

They all looked at PotaTeo for a response and he got embarrassed because of it. The four of them continued looking around until suddenly...

I got it!

You did?!

Yup!
It was inside the fish tank for some reason.

Is it waterproof?

Let’s hope it is.

G picks up the letter and opens it.

“Hello, this is Artender. Sorry if we couldn’t greet you guys here. We had to leave before the Crystal Knights arrived.

For the part you are probably waiting for; Hood suggested we stay inside one of her old abandoned bases. We picked the one closest to the Crystal Kingdom-“

“The base on the Mountain of Worth.”
* looks around *
Do you guys know about this place?

Not a clue.

The three notice PotaTeo raising his hand. He knew about that place already. So did Sarpo actually.

* chuckles *
I’m surprised you don’t remember, G.

Oug?
What do you mean?

Don’t you remember the first base we took down?
When Hood almost got us for good?

Oh shoot, is that the place?!

Sure is.
I heard that they turned it into a resort after the war ended.
* picks up PotaTeo *
Hence why the little guy knows about it too.

Uhh... can someone translate to English for me, please?

We know where their hideout is.

Oh… sweet!

Yeah, let’s just go already!

“We can’t let the crystal knights know we are close by!”

Still nothing, miss.

This is stupid.

Clara walks over to the hall with individual rooms and starts opening them one by one.

This place’s design has too much effort behind it.
They must have been staying here before they found out we were

coming... somehow.

Maybe we have another inside agent among us?

I doubt it.
The queen made sure something like that would never happen again ever since the Cloe thing.

Clara looks around and sees the empty prison cells.

This is where they kept our friends!
* grips her sword *
They must have let them starve to death, those monsters!

Clara sighs and looks at the ladder in front of her.

Well, they got out.
Big whoop.
I suppose we could continue looking for them above.
There doesn’t seem to be anyone in here anyways.

Clara commanded her group to follow after her. As Clara opens the hatch, she notices the quartet leaving the town with a map on their hands. But instead of fighting them, she kept quiet. She couldn’t believe what she was seeing, they had Potato Joe with them too! It was a two in one package! Clara was grinning ear to ear, she could imagine how proud her love would be once she brought those two to her.

Um... what are you waiting for, miss?

Yeah, is something wrong?

Keep quiet, you all.

“We are about to find out what happened to our allies.”

A few hours have passed by with the four of them following the location on the map. When they reached the bottom of the mountain, G sighed. This was his least favourite part. They used the newly built stairs on their way there. G sighed in relief, not knowing that a whole group of crystal knights were right on their tail.

So uh...
How much left?

Array, is that your catchphrase or something?

N-no, why would it be my catchphrase?

* chuckles *
It’s ‘cuz you say it all time, thunder boy.

Array closes his face in embarrassment.

Y-yeah.
You got me, bun bun.

It’s okay though.
I’m not that big of a fan of this mountain myself.

Yeah.
* chuckles *
Remember the time Bushra saved you from falling with his fishing hook?

Array giggles as G gets flustered.

W-why did you have to remind me?!
You could have saved me from the embarrassment too if you just helped us back then.

* chuckles *
Yeah, yeah but you learned a valuable lesson that day, right?

Yeah... I can’t argue against that.

The quartet continue walking and soon, they spot the basement right next to the resort. They were finally at the place. They could spot two or three people on watch duty on the balconies of the base. They wave and shout at the guards but they didn’t notice them. Regardless, the group was so excited to reunite with their friends after so long!

But suddenly, G felt the grip of a sword on his neck. They were being ambushed by crystal knights. G tried summoning his hammer but the stress was making him unable to focus.

G-guys-

Don’t say a single word.

The four of them looked at each other in worry. Clara points at PotaTeo with her undamaged eye.

I don’t have any interest in any of you besides the potato... and maybe the green one.
* points at Sarpo *
Give us the potato too and we will have mercy on you.

No way!

Why should we believe you?

Clara grips on her sword a bit more, causing G to bleed a little bit.

G-Guys-

That’s why.

Array, Sarpo and PotaTeo all looked at each other in panic. There was no way they were going to give PotaTeo away. But they weren’t going to let G be killed either. They had to do something. If only they could only get their friends’ attention...

Hey, Clara.

Shut it, Sarpo.
My beloved queen could have fallen for your tricks but I won’t make the same mistake.

Clara continues her threats.

Time’s running out!

Suddenly, Sarpo shot a laser towards Clara with his cybernetic hand as he pushes her away from G with a familiar device.

You still have the fan?!

I sure do!
Can’t leave anywhere without it!

RAGH!
* points at the quartet *
Knights, crystallize them all!
Except Potato Joe and the green one!

Sarpo quickly grabs all three of them and flied towards the base. Unfortunately for them however, Sarpo’s sickness was getting to him again.

Get us down, Sarpo!
* holding his neck in pain *
We can take it from here!

* holding his metallic body *
A-alright.

Sarpo safely lands to the ground and lies down on the floor. PotaTeo tried treating him with bandages while Array and G readied themselves for combat. Array looked at G in worry.

G...

* coughs *
I-I’ll be fine.

G points at PotaTeo to give him a temporary bandage. This would help him until the fight was over at least.

While PotaTeo was trying to help Sarpo, suddenly a potion was thrown on top of him. PotaTeo looked around in panic but thankfully, Sarpo seemed like he was doing better now. He noticed two scientists walking towards them.

“Heyo, you guys needed our help?”

We can’t take these guys down on our own!
We need backup!

But all of us are preoccupied!
How are we supposed to call for help?

Move out!

Right as Array finished his sentence, a bird Traveler rushed down from the sky and started throwing daggers at the crystal knights. They were all focused on her now, besides Clara.

Crystal knights, split up!
She’s distracting us!
Find the potato first!

Clara slaps a few crystal knights on the face to help her find PotaTeo.

Come with me, you nutjobs!
I... We can’t go back with another failure!

Clara rushed towards PotaTeo only to get stopped by a punch on the face by Hood Riley herself.

GAH!

Clara cleared her eyes and looked at the person who attacked her.

Hood Riley!
The enemy of the Crystal Kingdom!

Blah, blah, tell me something I haven’t heard before!

Before she could fight back, Artender also hits her from the back and dodges her sword attack. Clara looked around for backup but realized the small group she slapped were knocked down by G and Array. It was 2v1 now.

* wipes the blood of her mouth *
Enemies working together, huh?

Eh...
* waves his arm around *
It’s more so a technicality.

Yeah, pretty much.

I can’t believe you decided to work together before you decided to join the Crystal Queen!

It’s because the crystal queen is WRONG!

* swings her sword towards Artender *
No, it’s YOU people who are wrong!
I spent the most time with her!

* dodges her attack *
What are you talking about?

We worked together for months to turn my once destroyed town to a full blown city!
She then crystallized me and everyone to show us the light!
* points at Artender *
You MPC2 people did not help me at all while she helped me properly!

You don’t understand!
* going on the defensive *
We were occupied with Xtress’ shenanigans!
We would have helped you afterwards!

It doesn’t matter now!
It’s too late for that!

Clara kicks Artender with her foot. Before she could crystallize him, Hood stops Clara.

Don’t even get me started with you!

Where would you want to start from?
From my tyranny or from my good looks?

Clara takes advantage of Hood’s babbling and trips her to the ground. Before she could do anything, Clara pulls out her crystal ray and points at Hood and Artender.

Finally!
I have been waiting for this!
* readies the crystallizer *
I will finally have a victory-

Before she could finish her sentence, she felt a potion breaking behind her head. She looked back in shock as she noticed a scientist guy with orange hair waving at Artender and Hood. She started feeling dizzy as she dropped to the ground, unconscious.

D-did I do it right?

* helps Hood get up *
You sure did, Hattie.

After a few more minutes of fighting, the group stops and tries to catch their breaths. As they were about to continue fighting, they saw Henna landing on the ground.

Is-
* coughs *
Is everything in control?

Yeah it is, Artender.
* points around her *
We have successfully knocked down all the crystal knights!

That’s... that’s great.

Everyone all sighed in relief. They didn’t have to tire themselves out any longer. They all looked at each other in happiness. They all missed each other in one way or another.

H-hi, Artender.
Uh...
* sweats *
How have things been?

Hi to you too, G.
Before we properly start talking...

Suddenly, Artender leaned back and slapped G on the face.

OW!
* holds his face *
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?!

FOR PUTTING TEO AT HARM'S WAY, YOU DUMMIE!

G braced himself for another hit but instead, he noticed Artender hugging him.

Welcome back, G!
All of us missed you a ton!

* backs away *
Man, you should have seen your face, you were so out of it!

* frowns *
Ha ha, very funny, Artender!

(sarcastic) Don’t mention it.
* looks at G closer *
Oh, hey!
I dig your new look!

T-thanks!
* holds his side hairs *
I don’t why I have these now but it just... feels right, you know?

Amen to that.
Now...
* looks around *
Where’s my boy-

Before Artender could finish his sentence, he noticed a small potato rolling towards him in happiness.

TEO!

Artender picked up his son and hugged him as G and the others quietly let them have their moment of happiness.

Thank goodness you are safe and sound!
Me and your sister were worried sick!

As soon as she was mentioned, Emily rushed towards her dad and saw her little brother for the first time in weeks.

Brother Teo!
You are back!

PotaTeo nodded and jumped to her arms for another hug. G and Array were happy to see PotaTeo reuniting with his family.

* smiles *
Thanks for keeping my son safe throughout all those adventures.

No problem, Uncle Tender!
Your son has been a valuable member of our small team.

Y-yeah...
* notices someone *
Is-is that...

Artender was shocked to see someone else behind them. He cleared his eyes and saw Sarpo walking towards with the help of the Folio Bros.

Sarpo?!

Heya Artender.
It’s been a while.

Artender rushed towards Sarpo to help him walk.

M-Mr. Fields?!
* holds his robotic hand *
Are you alright?!
W-Where’s Miss Kitty Cat?!

...

Give him a little bit of space, sweetheart.
I’m sure Mr. Fields will tell you all about it later.

O-okay then...

Artender looked at the scientist siblings looking at him without a single thought in their heads. Henna was also waiting for Artender’s orders.

Hattie, Don.
You two help the others with carrying the crystal knights.
I will take care of my friend here.

Sure thing!

Yip yip!

* whispers *
“Yip yip”?
Seriously?

Oh, come on!
I just wanted a catch phrase!

You go take care of your clan too.
We wouldn’t want anyone to get hurt.

Sure thing.
* lightly hits him on the head *
Good luck with your friend.

Artender watched as the three of them left alongside a few other survivors.

Sarpo?
How are you holding up?

I’m doing fine, I suppose.
I just need to relax a bit, that’s all.

That’s good.
* holds him by his robotic arm *
These... these aren’t the same parts you used to have.

Sarpo nods in response.

B-but how?!
How are you here right now?!
How did you escape from the Crystal Kingdom when Cloe is-

Artender noticed from Sarpo’s looks that something was awfully wrong.

Oh, I-I’m so sorry!
I didn’t know-

It’s fine, really.
* takes a deep breath *

I will explain everything to you in due time but right now…
* points at his robotic leg *
I need to get used to my cybernetics again.

I... see.
I’m really sorry this happened to you.
I’m sure the Folio Bros. will help you get used to your cybernetics faster!

The who now?

Artender points at the Folio Bros messing with each other while carrying the crystal knights.

Those two?
They seem nice but I don’t think they are equipped to deal with my cybernetics.

It’s still worth giving it a shot, no?

Yeah... you are right on that part.

While the two were talking, Emily was “talking” with her little brother after such a long time. He was explaining his whole journey to her and she was clapping at his accomplishments. In the midst of all the reunions however, Sarpo was focused on someone else in the middle of the group.

* points at Hood *
I-Is that-

WHAT IS SHE DOING HERE?!

Woah, Array calm down, it’s just-

G, why is she even here?!
She’s a bad guy!

Nice to see you again too, Array.
* chuckles *
Getting used to that gauntlet, I see.

I’ll get this gauntlet to get used to your FACE, you jerk!

Before Array could attack, Artender runs towards the middle of the two and stops them from going at it.

Stop, you two!

B-but she’s a bad guy!

I am aware, Array.
But she helped us a lot during our time surviving against Maizie’s army.

I sure did.
* points at the base behind her *
Coming here was MY idea too!

B-But-

Please let this go, Array.
* puts his hand on Array’s shoulder *
Trust me on this one.

* sighs *
Alright...

It took me a while to get used to it too, Array.
* holds his hand *
I promise it will be okay.

O-okay.
* looks at G in the eyes *
Whatever you say, bun bun.

Emily notices Array in the middle of the crowd and rushes in for a hug. Array wasn’t expecting it, to say the least.

O-oh, hello Emily!

Hi, Mr. Thunder!
I missed you!

* chuckles *
I missed you too.

Hi to you too, Mr. Doodle!

Heya Emily!
How are you doing?

I’m alright!
Some bad guys tried attacking our home but dad beat them on his own!

Wait... “dad”?

Yup!
I love him so much!

That’s very nice, Emily.

Emily notices the two constantly holding hands and quickly realizes what was up.

Wait... are you two...

Yup.

We are a couple.
* looks at G *
And nothing can separate us again.

Awww!
You two are sooo cute together!

Thanks for the kind words, Emily.

Array noticed Emily trying to pull him towards their new base.

Um... what are you doing, Emily?

Come on!
* pulls him towards her *
This needs a celebration!

O-okay!
If you say so!
* looks at G and shrugs *
Guess we are going inside now!

* chuckles *
Yeah, I suppose so.
Lead the way then, Emily!

The four of them chuckle and walk towards the base. PotaTeo was excited to tell his adventures to his sister once they were inside. On their way there, they notice the survivors still carrying crystal knights to the prison cells. The Folio siblings were both carrying Clara.

Hey bro, you remember this chick?

Yeah actually.
Wasn’t she fighting Joyce when we were trying to escape from Diamond City?

Yeah!
Can’t believe she was still working for the queen.

Yeah, she seemed like a very determined warrior!
* looks at the empty potion bottles on the ground *
At least, before we... yeah.

I’m not a big fan of the sleepy potions either but at least it doesn’t hurt people!

“Yeah... at least there’s that.”

I can’t believe I’m saying this Hood but...

Buuuuttt?

* sighs *
Thanks for keeping the people safe for all this time.

* pretends to get flustered *
Aww... don’t mention it!
I did it because of the kindness of my heart, of course!

I still don’t trust you.

I know, pumpkin.
I know.
* lightly hits Sarpo’s shades *
It wouldn’t be fun otherwise!

Hood waves the two goodbye as she follows behind the group, leaving only Artender and Sarpo on the mountain side.

I’m so happy to have you on our side again, Sarpo.
You can’t believe how abysmal it was working with Hood.

I can only imagine.
She’s a terrible but very skilled individual.

Yeah... right on the money.
* points towards the base *
Let’s go inside too.
It’s getting late.
(Plus, it’s not exactly too safe outside.)

I know.
I just...

Sarpo looked upon the stars as they were falling.

“I just wish she was here to see how far we have come.”

A few hours later, inside the base;

You wanted to see someone?

Yes, I wanted to see… Bushra.
Bushra Stoked.

And you are?

G Doodle.
One of the MPC2 members.

I see.
* opens the door behind her *
Please proceed.

Thanks.

G slowly walked in the hallway, looking around for his best friend. There were a bunch of crystal knights stuck in these tiny cells. G wished there was another way to help these innocent people stay put until they stopped Maizie's reign over Perdiah but deep down, he knew this was the only way. He noticed a blonde girl and a tall guy with glasses taking a glance at him and was confused. They seemed... different compared to the rest. After walking for a few more minutes, he finally found who he was looking for.

Bushra.

Bushra quickly turned his head towards G, he wasn't expecting him to show up at all.

G?!
Is that you?!

Y-yeah.
It’s me!

I’m so happy to see you, buddy!

M-me too, man.
It’s been a very rough time, I’m so glad you are okay-

While you are here, can you let me out?

I-

Our friends seem a bit misguided.
So when I get out, I will crystallize you folks and we can be happy together!

...no.

Say that again?

I said no.

There was a moment of silence between the two.

But… why?
I thought you cared!

Trust me, I really do, Bushra.
But you are not thinking clearly right now.
* holds the cell bars *
I promise everything will turn out okay once we take Maizie down.

...

Sigh.

G slowly backs away from his cell. He really didn't know how to talk with his best friend in this condition.

I promise, the second we take her down, I will free you from there!

...okay.

Take care.
G waves goodbye at Bushra as he prepares to leave the prisoner room. Bushra also waved behind him, although G didn't notice it.

A few minutes after G left, Clara started mumbling to herself in her sleep.

Must catch... potato...
* squeezes the pillow *
Must make her happy...

Clara yawns and gets up. The potion's effects were wearing off. She clears her eyes and looks around, only to find out she was inside a prison cell.

NO NO NO!
* looks for her sword *
IT'S NOT THERE!
GAH!

Clara throws the pillow to the wall and starts sobbing. After everything that happened, she was at a breaking point. She was a failure in almost every way. She couldn't make her queen happy, she ignored the people who cared for her and worst of all... she was now alone.

B-boss?
Is that you?

Clara's eyes suddenly widened as looked around herself in panic. Was she hallucinating because of the potion or was it real?

L-Lydia?

Yes, it is you!

Where are you?!

Over here!

Clara leans on to the left wall of her cell and is able to hear Lydia more clearly.

Oh my gosh, I can’t believe you are here too!

Yeah, I’m surprised.

You are here too, Terry?!

Yeah... it’s really embarrassing, I know.

Clara was both happy and ashamed at the same time. Both her teammates were in the cells next to her but...

Are... are you guys alright?
Are they hurting you here?!

Oh, what?
No, no.
* smiles *
In fact, they were super nice!

Yeah and they bring us food every day as well.
They don’t seem like they want to hurt us...

Huh...
So, I was wrong...

There’s no shame in being wrong, boss!

Yeah, exactly.

Clara didn’t respond to them. She just knew what she needed to do.

I am... truly sorry, you two.

For what?
You didn’t do anything wrong!

Hm...

Yeah, Terry’s aware.
* holds her hand in embarrassment *
I... purposefully ignored you two to impress my beloved queen.
She’s the best person to ever exist and yet... I was never good enough for her.

The two heard Clara audibly sigh and were visibly worried.

Now, I realize that the thing I needed all along was... you two’s company.
She won’t come here to save me but you guys would have.

I’m truly sorry for what happened between us.
I hope you two will be able to accept my apology.

The two responded with silence initially. Until;

Boss... you are so sweet.

I-I’m not.

We knew you wanted to impress the queen from the very beginning.
We just wished you didn’t cut contact with us.

Yeah, besides that, you don’t seem like you changed at all!
And now, we are together again!
Isn’t that lovely?

Y-yeah... yeah, it is.

Clara smiled while the two couldn’t see her face. After such a long time, Clara finally felt peace within herself. All those troubles were worth nothing in the end because all she really needed was... her team, her closest friends, all along.

Once... this is all over, I will make things right between us.
I promise.

Very well.
* chuckles *
Glad to have you back, boss.

Yay, the team is back!

“And we will never split apart ever again!”

Meanwhile inside the Crystal Kingdom;

My queen, can I get inside?
I need something of importance to tell you.

Once the crystal knight got the okay and entered the room, she noticed the throne room all messed up with a bunch of pizza boxes lying around.

Um… my queen?

* snorts *
What do you want, peasant?!

Um... I was going to let you know that Clara hasn’t reported back from her mission.
We think something went horribly wrong.

The crystal knight expected frustration but instead, was met with something worse. Pure insanity. Maizie started laughing at the top of her lungs and threw a box of pizza towards the crystal knight. She held her head in anger afterwards.

O-Of course!
What did I think was going to happen?!

Maizie slams the throne in anger.

You send your top men and yet, you fail miserably!
They win every single time!
* closes her face with her hands *
Even with a global army, I fail!

Maizie suddenly looked around like she saw a ghost next to her and started shouting.

DON’T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!
* points her staff at the “invisible” entity *
I’M DOING ALL OF THIS FOR YOU!
YOU DON’T GET TO COMPLAIN!

Um... are you doing alright, my queen?
Perhaps you need to get treated again-

YOU ARE SAYING I’M NOT OKAY?!

N-no, I was just suggesting-

THAT’S IT!
* points at the door *
YOU ARE BANISHED FROM THESE LANDS!

B-but-

NO BUTTS!
* stops shouting for a second *
No butts...
No... butts!

Maizie found her joke rather hilarious that she started laughing maniacally, much to the crystal knight's discomfort.

GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, INTRUDER!
AND NEVER COME BACK!

Maizie calls for her other crystal knights to take this "intruder" away. She didn't even care about her cries for help. Why should losing one crystal knight even matter in the long run?! Losing Clara shouldn't have affected her this much but unfortunately for her, it did. The feelings were messing up her brain. She looked at a picture of her and the love of her life in shame. She was this close to getting them back but so far away at the same time. She couldn't stop thinking about all her own failures of ending the resistance. She couldn't find their hideout in time, she couldn't free the crystal knights they captured and most importantly, PotaTeo and Xtress were still out there. Suddenly though, she got an idea on what to do. She walked over to the cracked window next to her throne and smiled.

So... they want to come here and take back their world, huh?
Well...
* chuckles *
I will be happy to oblige.

Maizie went to the balcony and did the announcement everyone was fearing for. She called for all her crystal knights to return back to the kingdom. They needed all the manpower they could get for the final showdown!

TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
REScRIBBLED
XTRESS' CALL
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K
SUPERTAILS32

CHAPTER 37: XTRESS' CALL

The past...

Years ago, there was a village by the name of Village Risen. It was home to many innocent lives. Some were pacifists while others were willing to give up everything, just to protect their village from outsiders. One little girl in particular was determined to be the best of the best. She had been practicing all day with the guidance of her peers to one up everyone else in her group. Her sword fighting skills were unmatched, she was a true fighter.

Huff… puff...
* wipes off her sweat *
So... teach?

* looking at their notebook *
Yes, Ms. Thorn?

What do you think about today's performance?
* points at herself *
I did real good, eh?

Hm...
It was... satisfactory, I suppose.

Wha-

You are certainly doing much better compared to your friends but you still have a long way to go before you can truly become a royal

guard for our village.

Maizie looked at the ground with frustration. “Satisfactory”? SATISFACTORY?! It wasn’t enough! She had to be perfect! Better than anyone expected her to be. The teacher looked at the other kids practicing their sword fighting skills, they were not very good at it. Their teacher took a step forward and yelled.

Alright, everybody!
* looks at his handwatch *
Time’s up!
Return to your families this instant!

The students all left the training area one by one. Some were glad that it was over while others still wanted to practice. And then, there was Maizie, of course.

She wasn’t going to just accept this. If she could train more times a day compared to the usual; surely she would master the arts of sword fighting, Maizie thought to herself. And so, she came up with a plan.

In the middle of the night, after her friends at the orphanage went to sleep, she quietly left the building. She knew she couldn’t go to the training area because she would get caught otherwise. So, she had to make her own training area by herself. She needed an unbreakable target to practice. So, she went investigating. She noticed the abandoned farming area. It was once owned by a kind man who gave his life to protect their village, long before she was born. The MacMillians kept this place in decent shape, she thought to herself. She entered the area without making a sound and saw a scarecrow in the middle of the area. It was perfect! She pulled the scarecrow out of the ground and got out of the area before anyone could see her. First step of the plan was done. Now she had to find an area for practice.

After exploring inside the village, she comes to terms that she couldn’t realistically train in the village’s borders... so she had to find somewhere outside the village. After a bit of searching around, she found a hill with the perfect amount of free space to practice on her own. She was so happy! She planted the scarecrow to the ground and pulled out her sword. This was it! She was now going to practice!

For the few upcoming days, Maizie went to that hill every night to practice her sword fighting skills. But even after everything, her teacher still didn't give her the benefit of the doubt. She still wasn't enough according to them. So, Maizie decided to train even harder. She went out again that very night, preparing to train much longer compared to the previous nights. But what she didn't expect was the start of something far more important in her life.

She reached the hill with sweat all over her body. I will take a shower later, she thought to herself. Maizie pulled out her sword and readied to be the best that no one ever was! In the middle of her training however, she heard something close by.

Maizie looked around after hearing it. She raised her eyebrow in confusion. Where was that sound coming from? She shrugged and continued practicing. But shortly after, the sound repeated itself. Maizie looked around again and saw a boy the same age as her, watching her from behind a tree.

HEY!
WHO IS THERE?!

The boy hears her yelling and then gets scared. Maizie started chasing after him, she couldn't let him tell others about her secret training. And almost as she was going to lose track of him, the boy tripped on a rock and held his knee in pain.

Aha, got you!

The boy looked at Maizie with worry in his eyes.

Say, what were you doing over there?
It's not nice to stalk someone!
Didn't your mama teach you manners?

The boy looked away in shame and finally opened his mouth.

I-I’m really sorry.
I just-

Yeah, yeah, that’s what they all say...
* points her sword at the boy *
Tell others about this and I will make sure you don’t wake up the very next day.

The boy gulped in horror. What kind of a girl was she?!

Now get out of my sight and leave me be.

Maizie helped the kid get up and pointed back at their village. The sooner this kid left, the sooner she could get back to practicing.

C-Can I say something?

* sighs *
Sure.
Not like you already wasted my time.

I was just... very impressed by your fighting style.

Maizie raised her eyebrow in confusion. What was this boy talking about?

What do you mean?

I have been watching you train for days now!

“Watching”?
You are not part of the training group?

Nope, father does not want me to get my hands dirty.

Hm...

Usually, girls in our village seem to prefer farm work.

Sigh...
* looks at her sword *
Tell me about it.

But you seem... different!
You are one of the few girls to practice sword fighting just as much...
if not more than the guys!

Maizie was shocked. She blushed and then quickly hit her cheeks to not embarrass herself further. No one had ever praised her like this before.

But yeah uhm...
* holds the back of his head *
I-I’m truly sorry for sneaking up on you.
I will keep this a secret, scout’s honor!

As Kyle prepared to leave, he felt Maizie holding his left shoulder.

Wait up.

* looks back *
Huh?

You know...
* look at her sword *
I’m surprised you actually get me.

I-I mean, yeah!
You seem pretty cool!

...thanks.
* puts her sword away *
Say, if you want to... we can train together in the night times.

W-what?!
* his eyes widen *
You... you mean that?

Yeah, sure.
As much as I enjoy training by myself... It gets quite boring when I’m alone all the time.
* looks at Kyle *
It’s about time I change that.

Kyle was grinning ear to ear. Maizie couldn’t help but smile at his innocence.

T-thank you... Um... what was your name?

Oh, right.
Sorry.
* coughs *
I’m pretty bad at first introductions.

N-no worries.
I’m also not that good myself!

* reached out her hand *
My name is Maizie Thorn.
And you?

Kyle Lawrence.

“Kyle Lawrence”, eh?

Yup!

That’s a fancy name.

Maizie looked back at the scarecrow and then looked at Kyle again. She smiled. She knew this was the start of a beautiful “friendship”.

Present day...

It was an interesting night on Planet Perdiah. The war preparations were well on their way. Hood, Henna and Artender were planning along while the Folio Bros. were arguing with each other. It could be argued both Artender and Hood were also arguing with each other. Artender goes to check up on his kids.

Heya kiddos, how are you doing tonight?

Yeah, I’m doing fine, Uncle Tender.
* points at the girl with the bow *
She’s such a nice lady!

...you sure?

Yeah!

PotaTeo also gives him a thumbs up. Artender couldn’t argue with the results.

Well, I will be on my way kids.
You continue having fun.
I have... grown up things to do.

Okay!
Have fun, dad!

Artender smiles from her response. Dad, huh. She really did see him as a dad now. He was so grateful for having her and PotaTeo in his life. He waves the two goodbye as he leaves the main hall to check up on the other Vengeful Rubies members. Artender saw Henna and Hood talking about war plans. Hood was leaning on her chair with her feet on the table, covering Henna’s plans.

So, with our army surrounding the whole castle, we should be able to attack each side with precision-

BORINGGGGG!

Oh, am I interrupting something?

Nah, birdie was just yapping!

* whispers *
Ignore her.

Will do.

But as I was saying, I was thinking of surrounding the whole castle with our troops!

...that’s it?
I don’t think that’s a viable plan.
I mean we don’t have enough people for that!

The blondie is right.

Y- you agreed with me?!

Eh, gotta be different once in a while.
Cherish it.

Hood pushes away Henna’s plans and puts her own blueprints to the

table.

So here’s what we should do-

Hood notices that she put a different blueprint rather than the war plans she conducted. She quickly pulled it towards her and put the actual blueprints to the table. Artender couldn’t see much of the other blueprint but it looked like... Array’s gauntlet?

So, as I was saying... Here's what we should do!

Hood pulls out a bunch of mini figures of the Vengeful Rubies members.

Ooo!

What...
* picks up his own figure *
Why did you go through all this effort?

No questions allowed until I’m finished!

Sigh.

Meanwhile; G was roaming around the basement not knowing what to do. Array was also following behind him.

Hey, G?

Yeah?

What’s wrong?
You don’t seem to be doing fine.
* holds his hand *
Is it about us?

WHAT?!
* shakes his head *
Absolutely not, thunder boy.
I was... I’m just not sure.
After I got my powers, I thought I would have figured everything out by now!

...but?

I-I don’t know.
It feels like everythings coming to an end and the cycle is going to repeat itself all over!

* raises his eyebrow *
What do you mean exactly?

We rested in another hoodster base just like this before we fought against Xtress!
And shortly after, Xtress came to haunt us again!
And after ALL of that, Maizie just couldn’t stop with her evil schemes!

Oh boy, that’s a lot.

You know it.

G sits down on his bed and looks around his stuff.

I want this Maizie thing to end as much as the next guy but... what if we have to suffer through something like this again?

I feel like we should focus on the evil queen first.
* holds his hand *
Besides, you will always have me.

…yeah, good idea.
* gives him a kiss on the cheek *
Thanks sweetie.

“Now come on, let’s double check our stuff for tomorrow.”

So, then I told Hattie about my very secret potion-

That you stole from me!

Ooo, this is exciting!

I don’t think you should be watching these two, Emily.

* points at Hattie *
My potion was supposed to make plants come back to life!

And mine was supposed to resurrect people!

Please, that sounds like the plot of a terrible zombie movie!

Hey, I know my zombie movies!
I would not make the same mistakes those guys do!

Okay, funtime’s over people.

Aww...

* looks at Midori *
Thanks for taking care of the kids, Midori.
You are dismissed.

It was my pleasure, sir.

Goodbye, Ms. Midori!
See you later!

See you kids later too…

Midori waves goodbye as Artender picks up both of his kids to get them to bed.

Tomorrow’s a big day for all of us kiddos so you two should get some rest beforehand.

But I don’t wanna!

Trust me little one, it will be worth it.

...fine.
* hugs him *
I trust you, dad.

Meanwhile, in the planning room, someone was explaining what had happened to him all those days ago...

... and, that’s what happened back in the Crystal Kingdom.

O-oh my gosh, that sounds terrible.
* holds his hand *
I’m sorry you had to experience that!

Yeah, yeah, thanks for being understanding.
* looks over to the kingdom on the map *
I’m just more so curious about how Maizie is doing...
* sighs *
I did what I had to do to survive but... I still feel uneasy over doing... that.

Perhaps, you just had a moment of deja-vu?

* angrily looks at Hood *
What are you talking about?

Oh, you know?
* makes a scissor with her left hand *
Chop chop!

Sarpo got up on instinct to give Hood a lesson but he was quickly stopped by Henna.

Woah, woah, take it easy, sir!
We are on the same side!

But she...
* slowly starts sitting back down *
She...

Sarpo looked at Hood with a disgusted expression. Even while they were on the same side, she felt the need to bring up her past atrocities. They had no respect for each other, it was just that Hood was better at using that to her advantage. So, he decided to sit back down and listen to the two as they continued talking about their plans.

No big response, eh?
Tsch. So disappointing.
* shrugs *
Oh well. So…
* puts her blueprints over Henna’s out of spite *
Let’s get back to talking about MY plan!

Like I told you.
That plan makes ZERO sense!

Like yours was any better!

The two continued arguing, much to Sarpo's annoyance. He punched the desk to make the two stop bickering. The two looked over to see the tired Sarpo.

Ladies, can we just focus on the situation at hand?

Sure, Sir Fields but she-

I was just telling my plans like a normal person does!

No, the heck you were not!
Sir Fields, I was just "gently" telling Hood about my plan until she sabotaged it!

* looks over to Hood *
Somehow, I don't have much doubt in believing that.

Tsch.
* whispers to herself *
(I will show you what's "gentle", you ugly, feathered b-)

HEY!

ENOUGH!
* points at both of them *
Can you two stop acting like children?!

HAH!
You are also to blame, not just me birdie!
In your face!

Sigh...
* looks around *
Where’s Artender?
He usually deals with Hood just fine.

Oh, he left to take care of his kids.

Oh, that makes sense.
I did come to cover for him, after all.
* looks at the blueprints *
So... you are suggesting an all-out attack, Henna?

Yep!
With my travelers and you guys’ group, we can tear down that wall!

Hm...

Can I say mine too?

…sure.

So, I was thinking...

Hood gets up and picks up all the figures and places them on the Perdiah map.

From the intel we got from kitty cat, we should attack from the back first!
That place has way less security compared to the other parts.

Hood places the G figure and her own figure at the back.

Me and the bald one... I mean G, will distract them with goofy outfits.

...what?

I will dress as a precious princess while G can wear... I don’t know, a bush.

* holds her head *
Sigh, welcome to my life.

* slowly claps *
Hood, this has been rather amusing but can you get to the actual plan-

Oh but I am not done yet!

She picks up Sarpo and Henna’s figures and places them in front of the castle.

You two will take care of the armies and launch an attack!
Since they will be too focused on you guys, me and G will enter the castle!

And then…?

And once we are inside the throne room, I-
I mean... “we” will take down Maizie and steal her powers for our personal gain!

Yeah, that’s enough of that.

Sarpo stands up. The two were looking at him for approval.

Sir, before you speak, I highly recommend you pick my plan.
I know it needs to be ironed out a tad bit but it’s my people’s way-

Pfft, typical Traveler.
Bringing their people to the conversation when they don’t need to be mentioned.
* stands up *
You should go with MY plan, pumpkin!
The distraction WILL work!

As much as it pains me to say this... we shouldn’t attack tomorrow.

What?!
* also stands up *
B-but we told everyone that we would end this once and for all tomorrow!

These plans... they aren’t good enough.
We can’t risk everyone’s lives when we don’t know what we are going to do.

Or... you can just go with mine!

Can it, Hood.

Oh phooey, such a shame.

I will let others know the change of plans tomorrow morning.
It’s too late to make an announcement of this magnitude when almost everyone is sleeping.
* looks at the two *
Are we clear?

The two kept quiet. Hood was still aminent about her plans but Sarpo wasn’t going to have any of it.

Good.
* raises his hand *

Goodnight, you two.

Goodnight sir...

Yeah, yeah, goodnight you cyborg freak...

And so, the group went to sleep, not knowing that they would have to act sooner than they expected.

The evil sorcerer Xtress has been looking for a power source ever since his fight with Maizie. He had the chance to get more powerful but that stupid blonde and bald kid stopped his plans. And his traitorous son, blegh! Xtress was so close to another temple, he couldn't give up now.

After a few more minutes, he reached Temple Nevermore! A much more simplified temple with many decorations next to it. Xtress looked around in case anyone would try to stop him. Thankfully, there was no one. He looked at the sign on the temple but decided to ignore it. He tried blasting the door open with brute force. But unfortunately for him, the temple was resilient.

RRGH... STUPID TEMPLE...

He looked at the sign again to read its contents.

"One must destroy all targets in life to proceed with time."

Xtress was confused but intrigued. He imagined this wouldn't be too difficult. He pressed upon the sign to start the challenge. The temple started lighting up much like other temples. But instead of being teleported somewhere, a bunch of targets appeared around the temple. He didn't know what was going on but he couldn't let this stupid game beat him.

SHOW YOUR FACE… SIGNS!

Xtress noticed the signs floating above the temple and started blasting each of them one by one. He was pretty good at this. After a few minutes of breaking the targets, he looked back, with his pride intact, and waited for the temple's passage to open... but it didn't.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!

Xtress looked around his surroundings for possible targets. He couldn't have missed one... right? Suddenly, the lights around the temple got weaker as he realized he failed the challenge. Xtress looked angrily at the temple, it looked like it was taunting him.

RAGHHH!

Xtress couldn't handle another failure. So, he channeled all of his power to himself at that moment and suddenly exploded on the spot. As his sheer anger towards the temple fueled his energy, he watched as the temple got destroyed in front of his very eyes. Even he was surprised he was able to do this.

YES… YESSSSSSS!

FINALLY!

Xtress rushes towards the remains of the temple and sees an emerald lying around where the river was supposed to be. Xtress couldn't believe what he was seeing. After everything... he won.

YESSSS!
* picks up the emerald *
COME… COME TO ME, MY HOODSTERS!
RISE... RISE FOR YOUR MASTER!

As he held the emerald upwards, a powerful wave of energy emerged from the gem, covering the entire planet. He started absorbing the power from the gem, making it lose its blue tinted color. Then, he sinisterly looked at the now powerless gem and saw his reflection from it. Now was time for revenge.

In the meantime, Vengeful Rubies were sleeping peacefully, unknowing of the danger they were about to face. Out of nowhere, Emily started shaking in her bed. After a few seconds, she got up from her bed and started walking towards the door. Artender was also awaken from her noises.

Ugh...
* clears his eyes *
Emily?
Why are you awake?

No response.

Emily?

Artender noticed Emily not responding to him and trying to walk outside. PotaTeo was also awakened by Artender’s voice, not knowing what was happening.

Emily, talk to me!
* holds her by shoulders *

Where are you going?!

Suddenly, Artender heard sounds of shouting all around the building. There was chaos everywhere. Some people were trying to do damage control while others were trying to stop their friends from leaving the basement. There was a lot of shouting, from very familiar faces too.

ARTENDER?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!

I DON'T KNOW!

Suddenly, Don and Hattie rushed towards opposing corridors while hastily trying to wear their clothes. They started throwing potions to make rock walls to stop people from leaving.

Care by me why you didn't tell me you were also making a potion like this?!

Now is not the time for that, bro!

* shakes his head *
Right, right.
Dunno why I was so competitive all of a sudden.

It's fine, bro.

The two saw the walls starting to crack from all the force behind it.

Ooh boy, we might need another layer.

On the other side of the building, both Sarpo and Hood, while in their pajamas, were running towards the confused Artender.

Why did everyone wake up?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!

I-I don't know!

We have been trying to find out the cause of this!

Well, I got a theory.

* trying to hold Emily in place *
Well, what is it?!

From what my smart mind can cook up-

GET TO THE POINT!

Okay, okay, geez.
No show, only talk with you people.
Hood coughs and points around herself as an example.

From what I can gather, they seem to be hypnotized.

We could figure that part out!

My guess is that my previous hoodsters are affected by it!

Sigh... of course.

No… that’s impossible!
* looks at Emily *
It can’t be...

Unless...
* points at Emily *
You know?
Use your brain.

No...

Aww, she didn’t tell you?
* giggles *
Such shame.

Artender’s whole world suddenly turned upside down. Everything he knew about his daughter... was a lie.

You...
* hardens his fists *
YOU WILL PAY FOR THAT!

Artender jumps towards Hood to punch her in the face, letting out all his anger in the process. Unfortunately for him though, G and Array were trying to hold him in place.

N-NO!
LET ME GO, YOU TWO!

Artender, calm down please!

Come on Artender!

B-but... Emily...

She’s just trying to mess with you!

Yeah, come back to your senses, man!

Artender takes a deep breath and looks around to see all the chaos. The Folio Bros, Henna, Midori and Sarpo were all trying to keep people safe while he was just trying to take his petty revenge. He sighed and walked back a few steps from embarrassment.

But I don’t understand...
Why did she even become a hoodster...

Geez, I don’t know, pumpkin.
Maybe she was desperate, maybe she felt abandoned or she had evil intentions all along!
I’m not sure.
Perhaps you should have asked more questions to your so-called “daughter” when you had the chance!

YOU ARROGANT B-

That’s enough!

Sarpo arrives at the scene with everyone following behind him. Almost every ex-hoodster had been contained... except for Emily, that is.

What’s up, guys?

Not now bro.
Important stuff.

Oh, sorry.

What’s going on with you guys?!

E-Emily...
* trying to hold back tears *
She-she’s a-

A hoodster, pumpkin.
* chuckles *
Our blonde friend learned it the hard way.

I...
* holds his mouth from shock *
I didn’t know...

Hah, did she seriously not tell any of you?!
* wipes off her tears from laughing too much *
You guys are hopeless.

Shut it, Hood!
Speaking of you and your idiotic statements...
* points at Array *
If your “hoodster” theory is correct, then why isn’t he hypnotized like Emily?!

I’m...
* puts her left hand on her chin *
I’m not sure actually.

Um...
* pulls out his necklace *
I-it’s because of this?

What is that?

It stops Xtress from taking control of me-

Wait a minute.

Oh my gosh.

* the two look at each other *
IT’S XTRESS!

Uh... who?

I don’t know either but I guess we will find out.

Yeah, think of it like a history lesson!

* makes a wry face *
You guys are weird.

Of course!
He must have found a way to summon back all his hoodsters!
That sneaky bastard...

Stop talking to yourself.
Do you know what we can do in this situation?

I’m... not sure.
I suppose we could find out where the center of his “call” is by using one of the hypnotized hoodsters...

Everyone collectively looked at the still crying Artender holding Emily with his arms. He couldn't let his daughter go, even if he didn't know her full story. He cared about her and she cared about him. PotaTeo was also hugging his sister too.

Artender... we need someone to show us where this is coming from...

I overheard you guys earlier...
* sniffs *
I... don't know what to feel anymore.

Trust me, I care about her as much as you.
I found her in the streets all by herself.
* reaches out his hand *
She would want this nightmare to end, just like the rest of us!
So please, follow my lead.

Artender looked at Emily one more time before making the hardest choice in his life.

Okay... I trust your judgement.

Thank you, Artender.

Artender shook Sarpo's hand and reluctantly backed away from Emily alongside PotaTeo. They watched as she tried leaving the the basement on her own but failed because of the locked doors.

That should keep her busy for a bit.

Now what?!

We follow after her, of course!
Were you even listening, pumpkin?

You shut your filthy mouth!

Sarpo suddenly heard the footsteps of a guard running towards him.

Sir Fields!

Report.

We are trying to secure the area while not letting the hypnotized people leave!

Good.

* scratches his bandage *
What should we do now?

Keep looking after the hypnotized ones.
Them attacking us would end up disastrous.
We are just going to find out their source.

Understood.
Who are you going to take with you?

Sarpo smiled and looked behind him. He already had a group of misfits in mind for this.

You leave that to me.
* lends him a spare radio *
We will contact you guys if things go bad.

Understood!
I will prepare my unit until then.
* raises his hand *
Take care, sir.

The guard ran back towards the other guards to help them.

Listen up everyone!
We are all going on a dangerous mission right now so I need the best of the best for this!

Sarpo points at the Folio Bros.

Folio Bros!
You two are very skilled at potion making, we need you protecting us from the effects of Xtress' attacks!

Yes, sir!
We are happy to be of service.

A-are we really?
This Xtress fella sounds very scary...

Come on, bro!
We are the Folio Bros!
Nothing stopped us before!

* chuckles *
Yeah, you are right.
* raises his hand *
Yes, we are in, sir!

Excellent!

Then Sarpo pointed at Henna and Hood.

You two are our best (and only) planners.
We will need you guys' quick planning on the battlefield.

Oh, I'm flattered, pumpkin.
Didn't think you thought of little ol' me like that!

I appreciate it, Mr. Fields but do we HAVE to bring her with us?!

Watch your tone, fried turkey.
This is Hoodster business!

Sigh...

Sarpo decided to direct his attention towards Midori.

Midori, you are one of our best commanders.
I need you to lead the heavy pushes.
Can you do that?

Of course, I can, sir.
It would be my pleasure.

Sarpo looks around for the Tender family and sees them determined as ever.

This is a family matter so I don't need to tell you guys why you should be coming with us.

You are dang right!

PotaTeo hardens his fist and shows off to everyone around him. He was determined to save his sister too. And the only ones left were... G and Array.

You two are our strongest assets.
We will need you to defeat Xtress like you did back at Village Low!

You are right we will!
* looks at G *
Right, G?

No response.

G…?

I feel we need one more hard-hitter for this mission!

Oh?

Who could you be possibly referring to?

5 minutes later, in front of the prison cell hallway;

I can’t believe you.

Ssshh... calm down.
I will try to talk to him!

You think this is a good idea, sir Fields?

I sure hope so.

G slowly walked towards one of the cells to greet his old friend.

Heya Bushra.

O-oh- hi, G!
Boy, am I glad you are here!

Yeah... me as well.

I heard quite a lot of rumbling outside!

Did my friends finally crystallize you folks?

Thankfully no.
It was Xtress calling the past hoodsters to himself.

Ugh, that creep.

You know it.

So then why are you here?

I figured... Since we are gonna fight Xtress again, we need Team Bushra back!

You... really mean it?

Heck yeah, dude!

Hm... I don’t know.
You left me here for a long while.
How do I know you are not lying to me?

* sighs *
Tell you what.
When this is over, I will get myself crystallized.
How does that sound?

Bushra’s eyes suddenly started lighting up. He was so happy for all the wrong reasons.

Ooh, you got a deal, alright!

* nervously sweating *
T-thanks?

G opens his cell and lets him out. Bushra was now free to move wherever he wanted.

Now then...
* tips his hat *
Let’s take down that bozo!

Both G and Bushra leave the hall of prisoners and meet up with Array and Sarpo.

I can’t believe you brought me into this, G.

Heya Sarpo.
Long time no see!

Heya to you too, Bushra.
(You are going to have to do a lot of apologizing when you are back to normal.)

* pretends not to hear *
I’m sorry, what was that?

Nothing.

* chuckles *
Classic Sarpo humor, we love to see it!

You think this is a good idea, bun bun?

I’m not exactly sure hon but I hope it will pay off.

Oh by the way, can I get back my crystallizer gun?

NO!

Okay, okay, geez.
I just wanted to ask.

As the four of them left the basement, they saw everyone in the group waiting for them.

You let him out?!

Sigh, don’t start this again!

I don’t know but that guy’s giving me the bad vibes, bro.

Agreed, Don.
Agreed.

Who’s that...

Sir, you better have thought this through...

I did.
* looks at Bushra *
He doesn’t have his crystallizer, he can’t harm any of us.
Besides, he’s going to help us.

You sure?

...yeah.
Sarpo slowly walked towards Artender, still holding Emily in place outside. It was time to let him go.

Is it time?

Yes.

Artender lets Emily go as she starts running towards the woods.

Everyone after Emily!
* prepares to fly off *
I will watch over her while flying!

You got it!

I’m coming too!

Alright!

Be careful out there, Mr. Fields.

Will do.

Everyone started running after Emily while Henna and Sarpo followed her from the bird’s eye view. Sarpo was trying to find out where she was going. Sarpo noticed so many people around the globe all trying to reach the same destination. But that wasn't even the worst part. When he realized where she was headed, he almost lost his grip in the air. Because the said destination was none other than...

Oh no...

Emily and so many were all on their way to the Crystal Kingdom and there was nothing anyone could do to stop them.

Ma’am... you might wanna see this.

WHAT IS IT NOW?!

Maizie pushed over the Crystal Knight who just came here to warn her and looked outside from her window. She was ecstatic to see

what was happening.

THIS IS PERFECT!

Ma’am... are you okay?!

Ready all crystal knights for a counter attack!
We are about to capture that red fool once and for all!

But my queen, he has an army too!
You are putting our people at danger!

Oh who gave you the authority to talk to me like that, again?!
* suddenly turns her back *
I know sweetie but I just can’t back down now!
Not when I’m this close to getting you back!

I...

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
GIVE THEM THE ORDER!

O-of course!
I’m on my way!

The crystal knight leaves the throne room, terrified at what their once beloved queen turned into. But that queen hasn’t been this happy for a long time. With Xtress’ attack, those dastardly heroes would also

make their way here, making it easier for Maizie to get all of their powers for the love of her to come back to life! This day couldn't have gone any better!

TURTLE'S EXPEDITION RESCRIBBLED

FIGHT FOR THE KINGDOM

TURTLEDOODLE1 SUPERTAILS32

CHAPTER 38: FIGHT FOR THE KINGDOM!

The past...

Heya Mazes, what do you plan on practicing today?

Hm... I don’t know.
* Sharpening her sword *
I will probably do my usual training with that annoying teacher until we meet up at the hill again.

Sounds good to me!

It was the start of the day. The two “friends” were talking to each about their lives on their way to their daily routines. Maizie was wearing her usual clothing with the blue color scheme while Kyle was wearing a more feminine outfit compared to hers. Maizie was fond of his new look.

Boy, this is going to be a great day, I just know it!

Yeah, yeah.
* chuckles *
You have improved a lot since we first trained together.

Thanks to you!
When I first started, I didn’t even know how to hold a sword!
But now?
I would say I’m an average swordsman now!

(...is that supposed to be a good thing?)

While they were walking peacefully, suddenly a buff kid of their same age stopped them on their tracks.

Where do you think you twats are going?!

Hey, what’s the big idea?!

Well, well... isn’t that Mr. Lawrence?

Y-yeah?
* shaking *
That’s me, alright!

Didn’t I tell you not to come to this area ever again?

O-oh, right, s-sorry!
I was just so busy talking to my friend that I forgot about that for a second!
Sorry about that.
* Tries to turn around *
W-We will go now.

Oh no, you don’t!

The bully picked Kyle up by his shirt and threw him to the ground in an instant.

HEY!

HAH!
Pathetic!!
* Looks at the crying Kyle *
That will show you not to forget about this stuff!

Hey, jerk!

Eh?

Leave us alone!

The bully kid chuckled and looked at Maizie with a grin on his face.

You said something, girlie?
What are you going to do?
Beat me to death with your makeup?!

The bully slapped his knee and laughed at his own joke. He looked back at Maizie with a smile only to see her holding a sword towards his face.

W-what-

The bully backed away a few steps. Why did this girl have a sword in the first place?!

W-where did you get that?!
Y-you are just trying to scare me!
I’m sure you don’t even know how to use it!

Maizie looks at the bully in silence. She looked at the apple that was once inside Kyle’s basket on the ground and she threw it in the air. She sliced the apple midair with perfect accuracy and looked at the bully again with an empty expression.

I-I-

The bully quickly ran away from the two while shouting “This isn’t over yet!”. Maizie shrugged, typical bully stereotypes. She would beat him if he ever tried something funny again anyways. What she cared about the most was how Kyle was doing. He was trying to collect the fruits he dropped from the ground. He couldn’t help but tear up in the process.

Hey, hey, it’s okay!
I showed that guy not to mess with us ever again!
* Sits next to him *
But... what was that about when he told you not to come here?

I was...
* Wiping off his tears *
I just wanted to join their friend group a while ago.
Any guy is invited, they said.
But when I got there… they all looked at me weird.
* Points at his outfit *
They made fun of my outfit, my personality... everything!
I was kicked out and was given the rule of not entering this part of the village.
Or else they would beat me again...

Hey!
Don’t listen to them!
I think your outfit looks cute!

Y-you mean that?

Of course!
That’s what people like him enjoy doing, preying on the people who can’t defend themselves!

I… I guess so.

But fear not!
* Points at herself *
When I’m with you, you won’t have to worry about those jokers!

* Starts tearing up again *
T-thank you, Maizie.
* Hugs her *
You are my best friend.

* Hugs him back *
Don’t mention it, Kyle!
I will always be with you.

Maizie hears her teacher calling for her to arrive. That bastard couldn’t even let them have a moment.

Sigh, I guess the class is starting.

N-no worries, Maizie.
* Picks up his basket *
See you again tonight!

Yeah...

“See you there, too.”

Present day...

It was the time of war on Planet Perdiah. So many people across the planet were gathered around the place where it all began. Xtress and his mind controlled hoodsters! The Vengeful Rubies! And of course, the one and only, Maizie the Crystal Queen! Who will end up victorious? No one knew as they were all headed to the fight of their lives!

Ack!
* Pushes the leaves away *
Where are we even going?!

I-I don’t know!
Sarpo and Henna didn’t tell us where we were headed!

Chill out, guys!
We will all be crystallized anyways!

Are you sure bringing him along was a good idea?

Hey, I trust my best friend!
I know he’s not exactly... himself right now but I know he will be a big help when the time comes!

Thank you kindly, G.

G looked at both Array and Bushra. The dream team was finally back!

I feel we can take care of Xtress and his cronies just fine!

You said it!

Uh... so let me get this straight.

Yeah, yeah.

Do tell.

There’s a red sorcerer out to kill us?

I guess so.

Yeah, Artender didn’t describe it all too well.

Ah alright.
* Shrugs *
Works for me.

Hood was getting bored of listening to these three trying to play catch up as she decided to mess with someone more... vulnerable.

Isn't the night sky so beautiful, Array pumpkin?

Don't talk to me, I still don't trust you!
We are only working together out of obligation.

Of course, of course.
* Chuckles *
We were also working together like this when you were one of my hoodsters, hmm?

Can you knock it off already?!

No can do!

Grrr… you stubborn…
* Points at Hood *
Why were you so eager to ask me about not being possessed by Xtress when you, yourself, aren't affected by it?!
You are THE hoodster!

Oh, finally!
* Raises both of her hands *

Finally, someone who asks the important questions!
* coughs *
I'm... you could say... a "special" type of hoodster.

Eh?

Do you want it all spelled out for you like a toddler?

At this point, yes!
* Crosses his arms *
Maybe you could try being less vague, so this doesn’t happen!

In short, I can't get possessed by the likeness of Xtress unlike you peasants!
* chuckles *
I’m just that special.

* Overhears the convo *
Weren't you possessed by the red man while we were trying to escape Nor Plane?

What now?

T-That was a special case!

Uh huh...
* Whispers at Array *
She's hiding something.
I don't trust her one bit!

Me neither Bushra but we gotta deal with her... at least for now.

Oh yeah, speaking of dealing with things...
* smiles *
Do you want to be the first one crystallized when we are done here?

...I think I'll pass on that.

* Looks ahead *
Artender, can you tell where Emily is headed?

What do you mean?

Like do you recognize where we are going based on what's around us?

I-I guess?
* Looks around *
I recall seeing some of these structures from our balloon trip.

Ooh, right.
Come to think of it... yeah, this place does look familiar.
Could it be-

Wait up!

Artender suddenly stopped in his tracks and picked up Emily so that

she would stop running away from them any further. Unfortunately for everyone else however, everyone bumped into each other's backs.

Ouch, sorry bro.

All good, bro-

GET OFF OF ME!

Oops, sorry!

Hey, bow girl, get off!

Okay, okay!

Sorry bun bun.

All good, thunder boy.
Just help me get up and-

Everyone shut up!

Everyone kept shut and looked at where Artender was pointing at. They couldn't believe what they were seeing.

No...

It can’t be…

Unfortunately, yes.

They all watched as Sarpo and Henna land on the ground to deliver the bad news.

From what we gathered up there, it seems like Xtress is leading an attack on the Crystal Kingdom!

WHAT?!

D-Don’t worry, Bushra!
We will uh...
* Puts his hand on his chin *
Save your crystal friends!
Yeah!

O-oh okay!
If you put it that way!
* frown *
I just hope the queen is doing alright...

So, what’s our plan now, geniuses?

I wish I knew...

We have to think of something though ‘cuz we are running out of time!
Before Artender could respond, they all heard chanting coming in front of the walls of the Crystal Kingdom.

THE TIME HAS COME, MY FLESHY FRIENDS!
THE DAY I CONQUER THE CRYSTAL KINGDOM ONCE AND FOR ALL!

G could spot many familiar faces inside the crowd. So many people were all mind controlled and ready to serve Xtress.

TEAR DOWN THESE WALLS AND DON’T SHOW THEM ANY MERCY!

And so, every mind-controlled person collectively started damaging the walls. The group noticed some crystal knights defending the kingdom’s walls against the mind-controlled people, but it wasn’t enough.

Meanwhile, inside the crystal kingdom, one lone crystal knight was on their way to Maizie’s throne room to warn her about the invasion.

My queen, my queen!
X-Xtress is back!

* chuckles *

How fantastic.

He’s not alone either!
He has an army and everything!
What should we do?!

Prevent Xtress' army from entering the castle, of course!

B-But what about Xtress himself?

* shrugs *
Let him in, I have been DYING for a rematch!

WHAT?!

Yes...
* grins *
A fight between the two most powerful sorcerers on the planet...
Which I will come out victorious!

But m-my Queen-

Eh?
* Raises her eyebrow *
What is the problem here?

I thought you were gonna going to support our Crystal knights in the battlefield!

Mhm...
Perhaps I could…
* Looks at her staff *
But what’s the point when he’s coming to fight me anyways?
*Lays her back on the throne *
What are you implying here?

My Queen, with all due respect, last time you fought against that wizard... you lost!
We lost so many people in that fight! Not to mention...
* Glares at her Crystal arm *
Your condition...

How DARE you?!
* Points her staff at the Crystal Knight *
Who do you think you are?!
I’m the QUEEN of these lands and you are just a mere Crystal knight!

I-I'm sorry, my Queen... I was just worried about the safety of our people-

Screw the people!
They are all just replaceable anyways!
They are all sacrificing their lives for the cause and that's that!
* Slams her staff to the ground *
What good would a couple of Crystal knights do without their beloved Queen anyways!?

In the middle of her shouting, Maizie notices a familiar figure mockingly giggling at her in the mirror. Maizie's eyes widened, it couldn't be... The figure was the person who once controlled her entire life. And now, here she was, taunting Maizie again.

HOOD!?
H-HOW...
* Pulls out her staff *
GO AWAY!

The crystal knight didn’t know what was going on, but they realized something was horribly off. They were able to duck for cover as Maizie blasted the mirror with one of her powerful spells. Maizie thought she would feel better after the fact but instead, she walked slowly towards the broken mirror and saw that the reflection was hers all along.

My Queen...?
Are you alright?

Maizie couldn’t keep her eyes off the broken mirror. She was holding her face like she saw herself in the mirror for the first time.

…my queen?

No...
* Holds her head *
No, no, no, NO!
* Waves her hands around *
Don’t you DARE argue with me now!
I’m doing all of this for you!
* coughs *
GAH!
I won’t give up, not when I’m THIS close!

My queen, what are you saying-

J-Just go and do as I say!
* Holding her heart in pain *
Kill those mindless freaks if they resist the crystallization!
Don’t hold back!

* Takes a deep breath *
As you wish, my queen.

Maizie waited for the crystal knight to get out of the room before choking out blood. She didn’t know what was happening to her but she had to wrap up her plans FAST! She looked from her window to watch the battle underneath and waited for her rematch with Xtress to end this, once and for all.

So, what’s the plan now?

I don’t know.

Great insight, G.
* Looks around *
Anyone else?

We are very limited in numbers so to actually change the course of this battle, we have to be everywhere, at once!

What exactly do you mean, feather brain?

* Grits her teeth *
I’m saying that we should split up!

Hm...

And if we are lucky, we will be able to get in contact with our army back at the base-

What’s stopping you from just talking to them now?!

* Looks angrily at Hood *
As I was saying before, you RUDELY interrupted me...
* Pulls out the radio from her backpack *
I tried contacting them in the sky while we were following Emily and it seems like the connection was severed with!

Huh, that’s strange...

You said it!

Yeah, that DOES limit things...

My theory is that, maybe and just maybe... the connection is better inside the kingdom itself?

What gave you that idea?

Well... I figured maybe Maizie is calling for her other crystal knights around Perdiah for the final battle!
* Crosses her arms *
And in that case, how else are they supposed to communicate with each other?

…

Thanks Henna.
You made your point.
* sighs *
Unfortunately, it doesn’t change the fact that we have so much to take into consideration!

Like what?

Take down Xtress, avoid the ex-hoodsters AND the crystal knights, take down- I-I mean “befriend” Maizie and so on!

That’s why we could go with my plan!

...I will consider it.
* Looks around *
Anyone else got any ideas?

We can ask the new guys for one!

“New”?

S-sorry, I didn’t mean it like that!

It’s alright.
We take it as a compliment.

Yeah, I don’t know how this war mumbo jumbo works but I don’t mind being a part of it.

But suddenly, they all noticed the person with the gauntlet raising his hand.

Actually, I might have thought of something.

Oh?

Do tell us, Array.

Well... I was thinking.
We need someone to distract Maizie so that she doesn’t... win.

Hm... where are you going with this?

I figured... I could fight off Maizie on my own while you guys do your thing-

WHAT?!

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

B-but why?!

We can’t act recklessly again!
Sarpo fought against her on his own once and he barely made it out alive!

B-But think about it!

Too risky!
Idea dismissed!
* Looks around *
Anyone else?!

Actually... Array might be onto something.

Excuse you?

I... do?

...Kinda.

Oh.

Array is right about the fact that we should distract her with everything we got...

...and?

What I’m getting at is, he needs backup while fighting off that dastardly queen.

* Whispers to his brother *
Pretend that we know what’s going on, so we actually look smart.

Sigh... these two...

I see where you are coming from… but it’s still too risky.

Y-yeah, thunder boy!
I can’t allow you to go there on your own!

I know, I know.
But trust me on this, I feel I can take her out!
She hasn’t been on the battlefield for weeks while I’m nicely rested

with tons of experience!
Isn’t that enough?

Against crystallization?
I wouldn’t be so sure of that.

That’s what I have been thinking of too.

See, Array?
I told you-

Let me finish please.

Ack, my bad.

It’s alright.
* coughs *
-And that’s why I believe you need me to tag along with you.

Wha-

Excuse you??

Array seems like a very powerful kid for his age.
With my hindsight and his powers, we could turn the tides of the battle to our favor!

Y-yeah!
* Points at the kingdom *
We can fly towards the throne room and take that nasty lady down for good!

Uh... what?

H-He meant he was going to meet up with him, Bushra.

Huh... okay then.

That DOES feel more logical...

Artender was unsure of Array’s idea. On one hand, it was still too risky. But on the other hand, if the two were able to weaken Maizie before things go out of control...

So, let me get this straight.
* Points at Array *
You and Sarpo will fight off Maizie while the rest of us distract the army, correct?

That’s the jist of it.

Hm... fine.
You win this one.

Sweet!

An excellent observation, dear friend.

* Smiles and looks at Sarpo *
I feel like a team-up coming along!

Wait, h-hold on-

I will take it from here, Sarpo.
You two should go ahead if you want to catch her there!

Noted.
* Hugs Artender *
Good luck with your mission.

Good luck on yours' too.
You guys are gonna need it.

Before they could take off, Array felt someone holding his hand. He looked behind and saw G with a worried expression. G wasn't ready to let go of his love again.

I-I dont know how to begin.
Everything's moving so fast and...

G looks to his left and takes a deep breath. He had to calm down and stay strong for the both of them.

Please... Just be careful out there, okay?

Array smiled and hugged G. He was just as scared as G was, but he knew he couldn’t waste this opportunity.

I will, don’t worry, bun bun.
* Points at the group *
You take care of yourself and the others.

O-okay...
* sniffs *
Good luck out there, thunder boy.

They all watched as Sarpo and Array waved them goodbye and took flight towards the castle. Now, they had to follow suit.

As for the rest of us...
* Points at Henna *
Henna! You and I will try to connect to our group from inside the Crystal Kingdom!
If your theory is correct, they must have functioning frequencies inside!

Got it.

* Points at the Folio Bros. and Midori *
You three will back us up!

Sweet!

Brothers in arms, together as one!

Wait, am I seriously teamed up with these two?

* Raises his eyebrow *
Is there a problem with that?

...not really, I suppose?
It’s just, I would have preferred having more...

Midori watches as the Folio Bros. try to pull off an elaborate handshake with one and other.

“Professional” associates.

Meh, you can keep them at bay.

* sighs *
Whatever you say, sir.

* Points at Team Bushra and Hood *
And you three will be handling Xtress!
All three of you already have previous experience with taking that demon down so I trust you on this!

Ay ay!

Sure, whatever.

Oh yeah sure!
* grins *
If only you guys get crystallized afterwards though!

Yeah yeah, that’s lovely, Bushra.
Thanks for your input.
* coughs *
Anyways, did everyone understand their mission?

They all said “Yeah”, not in unison however so it just turned into loud gibberish.

Good enough.
Now... for the hard part.

Artender looks at Emily again. She was still trying to get away from them. Artender looked at her in sadness. He still didn’t want to let her go. Unfortunately for Artender, however, he had to say “goodbye” to her regardless.

SOMETHING’S NOT RIGHT...
* Squints his eyes *
SOMEONE’S MISSING FROM THE PACT!

Oh crud!
Artender, you have to let her go now!

What?! Why?!

He might think someone’s spying on him!
We can’t risk this!

B-But I can’t!
I won’t be able to forgive myself otherwise!

Trust me Artender, she would have wanted us to do this!

Artender looked at Emily with tears in his eyes. He was risking their entire plan for his beloved daughter... He noticed PotaTeo jumping out of his backpack to comfort him. Even PotaTeo knew this was the right thing to do... So eventually, Artender closed his eyes and let her go. He turned his back and looked at his friends in front of him. The sooner they ended this nightmare; the sooner he would get to see his daughter once again.

Children, eh?
They go away as fast they come into your life.

Shut it, Hood.
I will defeat both of those monsters for my daughter and that’s final!

Your choice, pumpkin.
“Just don’t say I didn’t warn you!”

OH, THERE YOU WERE!
I WAS WONDERING WHERE YOU WENT OFF TO...
LITTLE GIRL?

Xtress was confused to say the least. Why did a little girl take so long

to join their forces... unless...

NEVERMIND THAT!
* Points at the wall *
TEAR THE DOOR WIDE OPEN!”

“THIS KINGDOM IS MINE FOR THE TAKING!”

While Sarpo and Array were airborne, they noticed how tough the battle underneath them was. Ex-hoodsters were fighting the crystal knights, both sides not having free will of their own and instead, fighting for their sinister masters.

* Still flying alongside Sarpo *
You know where her throne room is?

Sure do.
Like Artender said, I did fight against her myself once.

Well... how did it go?

Not the greatest, I’m sorry to say.
* puts his hand on his chin *
Though I will say, I did technically rip out one of her arms in the process so-

Oh, what?!
Dude, that’s so baller!

* chuckles *
It wasn’t as cool as it sounded.
But I appreciate your enthusiasm, kiddo.

While they were airborne, Sarpo pointed at the top of the castle. This was it. They were really here. They were going to defeat Maizie for good!

You ready for this?
* Looks at the worried Array *
I mean I had some previous experience with her so I figured I might ask you first.

I don’t know what to feel, really.
I... knew her from my hoodster days.

Wait… really?

Yeah.
So, it’s a strange feeling to see her like this now... she used to be so calm and collected.

I see...
* Looks over to the castle’s walls again *
We will go in when you give the word.
I think they will spot us if we keep staying here.

STOP RIGHT THERE!

Speaking of the devil...

And so, a bunch of crystal knights arrived at the castle’s inner walls to stop Sarpo and Array. But no one could predict who was leading the charge against the two...

No...

Stop in the name of the Crystal Queen, you-

Cloe looked at Sarpo in shock. She couldn’t believe who she was seeing in front of him.

S-Sarpo?!
Is... is that you?!

Cloe...

(Who…?)

Oh-oh my gosh...
* Starts tearing up *
I-I can’t believe you are here!

Cloe looked back at her crystal knights.

Put down your weapons!

What?

Did I hear that right?

Put down our… weapons?

You all heard me correctly, do as I say now!

Everyone dropped their crystallizers to the ground afterwards.

I missed you so much, sweetie.
I... I can’t believe you are actually here!
I thought you were-

Dead?
Not a fat chance!

* smiles *
You are right.

* Smiles back *
I missed you a lot too!

Yeah!
Now that you are here... we can crystallize you, stop this invasion and live happily ever after!
* Smiles again *

What do you say?

...no.

Whu-

Sorry Cloe but no.
You are not... yourself right now.
I will save you and everyone else here.
Trust me.

I wish you didn’t say that...
* sighs *
...surrender now and I promise we won’t hurt you.

Cloe...

Otherwise...
Cloe orders the army behind her to take back their weapons.

I will have to do it forcefully.

...do you know about this girl?

Know her?!
I LOVE HER!

Ah.

I won’t repeat myself!
* orders the crystal knights to aim at the two *
Come with us now or you will be forcibly crystallized.

…

Please pick the logical choice, my love.
This pains me more than you realize.

I’m sorry Cloe... but I can’t.
* Points at her *
You will thank me for this later!

...very well.
* Points at Sarpo *
Knights of the Crystal Kingdom, crystallize these two!

Sarpo started dodging the crystal lasers with Array on his back trying to keep his balance.

Yikes, what’s the plan now?!

You remember how you said you wanted to go solo?

Y-yeah?

Well, you got your wish!

WHAT?!

Sarpo looked for an opening and noticed a window on the castle.

B-but what about you?!

There are too many crystal knights out here!
They will interrupt our duel with Maizie if I don’t keep them at bay here!
Plus...

Sarpo looks at the crystallized version of his love and tried picturing her as the version of Cloe he saw in his nightmares. It made him feel a lot better about his current situation.

I have my own battle to have here.

U-Understood, Mr. Fields.
* Barely dodges a crystal laser *
Youch! That was close!

Yeah, you be careful in there!
* sighs *
And good luck, we all believe in you!

T-Thank you!

Sarpo starts flying towards the throne room's broken window.

So... what now?
Do you just tell me when to jump or-

Suddenly, Sarpo threw Array towards the already broken window without warning. He waved Array goodbye without him noticing as he went back to those crystal knights to distract them.

That blonde kid got inside the queen's throne room!
Stop him before he hurts-

Cloe noticed Sarpo distracting the crystal knights and even making them push each other off the walls. Cloe was frustrated beyond belief.

Sarpo.

Cloe.

I really wish it didn't come this.

Trust me, it hurts me more just THINKING about it!
* Sheds a tear *
I WILL SAVE YOU FROM THIS FATE, CLOE!

* growls *
I DON'T NEED SAVING!

And so, the two lovers started fighting each other while trying not to hurt each other in the process.

Maizie suddenly heard the sounds of someone breaking in and decides to greet them.

My my, there you are, Xtress!
* Rubs her staff *
I knew you wouldn’t keep me waiting for too long!

But instead of meeting with the almighty sorcerer, she was met with a young boy holding his head in pain.

Ow... I wish Sarpo gave me a heads up...

WHAT?! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
* Rapidly looks around *
WHERE IS XTRESS?!

Oh, so you didn’t expect me?

Not at all!
* Points her staff towards him *
You are not worthy enough in the first place.

Maizie tried crystallizing Array on the spot, but he quickly avoided the move and makes her trip on the spot. Maizie frantically looked around herself in shock.

W-What?!
How did you-

Sorry queenie but you are facing off against ME now!
I may not be Xtress but I'm here to take you down for my friends and family!

Maizie angrily looked at Array with fire in her eyes. She wasn't going to lose to a mere kid.

"You are going to pay for that!"

You should stay in my backpack, Teo.
It's too dangerous out there!

PotaTeo looked at his dad with sadness in his eyes. He really wanted to contribute to the fight but realized his dad knew best. So he stayed inside while Artender and the other 4 tried finding a good spot for the radio. They were all hiding inside a bush, waiting for an opportunity to get inside the kingdom.

Wait...
* Looks around *
Where is Hood and the other two?

They went to fight against Xtress.
* smirks *
I know those three can take care of themselves.
Us on the other hand... need to be more cautious.

They watched as Xtress started blasting the crystal knights' homes. Some of them were fighting back while some were running for their lives... Artender was surprised that Maizie had the decency to do something like this.

The coast seems clear to me.

* Looks at Artender *
Artender?

Artender quickly shook his head to snap back to reality.

O-oh, sorry.
I was just thinking.

All good.
We need to get to a higher place for the connection to be stronger.

Henna looks around and sees a tall house very close to their current location.

That will do!
* Opens her wings *
I will have to carry you folks one by one to not blow our cover.

Sounds good to me.

I… have a fear of heights...

Oh, suck it up, bro!
This is the end of the WORLD!
We can’t risk that just because of your phobia!

Oh, don’t give me that!
You want me to tell your phobia to everyone here too-

SSHH, NO!
* Covers Hattie's mouth with his left hand *
Not in front of everyone!

* sighs *
I don't have such "phobia" so it's fine by me.

Good to know!
* Picks up Artender *
Okay, get ready!

The three watched as Artender and Henna took flight. She quickly flew towards the building and left Artender to start the process. A crystal knight did notice her blurry silhouette in the sky, but he was taken out by one of Xtress' minions before he could tell anyone else.

You start setting that up!
I will be back with the others!

Okay... good luck.

Artender picked up the radio from Henna's wings and got to work. He turned his back to set up the exact frequencies and waited for something to happen... He heard someone land behind him and turned his back to greet them. But instead of Henna... it was a crystallized bird traveler. Artender was shocked by the encounter, the traveler started blasting him with his crystal ray gun. Artender had nowhere else to run but here. He couldn't just leave the radio on here either. So, all he could do was stall for time.

DO NOT RESIST AGAINST THE CRYSTAL KINGDOM!

Artender didn’t respond and continued dodging the lasers with the best of his ability.

Suddenly, two potions hit the crystal knight on the face as the two scientists arrived from the sky. Taking advantage of their distraction, Henna hits the crystallized traveler on the chest, causing him to fall off the roof.

Are you alright?!

Y-yeah, I’m fine!

Sorry for taking so long.
I know I said I would carry you guys one by one but the human with the glasses didn’t want to go without his brother!

I-I’m sorry, okay?!
I was just too scared...

There, there, bro.
* Lightly hits him on the back *
It’s over now.

Okay... where’s Midori?

She’s waiting for me back there, I gotta hurry up!

The trio watched as Henna took flight once more. But the second she left; they were left with a bigger problem.

Um... sir Dowell?

* sigh *
What is it, Hattie?

You might want to look at this.

Artender looked around and saw that a dozen crystal knights were here to fight them on the rooftop. They were using their feathered crystallized traveler friends to reach them.

This is bad...
* Looks at the Folio Bros. *
You two, create walls with your potions and whatever to stall for time!
* Hits the radio for it to work *
Midori and Henna are on their way!

Will do, sir.
The brothers started creating a safe space with their potions but some crystal knights were able to bypass it by flying above the walls. Artender noticed the crystal knight about to attack them from above and drop kicked it before it had a chance to crystallize any of them.

Woah!
Impressive stuff!

Thanks!

“I learned it from a good friend!”

WHY. WON’T. YOU. GET. CRYSTALLIZED. ALREADY?!

Meanwhile, Array was fighting against the one and only, Crystal Queen. Maizie’s attacks were powerful but very brash at the same time.

No can do, queenie!
* Mockingly points at her *
You caused my friends and family a lot of trouble!
I can’t let you get away with that!

Maizie didn’t respond but instead, cast another spell onto Array. He punched the ground to create a dirt pillar to block her attack.

Insolent child!
You will slip up once and you will become one of my crystal knights, just like the rest of them!

I would rather not have that happen, thank you very much!

Array quickly stepped to his left and ran towards Maizie for a punch to the face. But she was able to block his gauntlet attack with her crystal arm. She tried crystallizing him in that spot but he quickly did a backflip to avoid her attack. He was getting tired by the second. He took a deep breath and hoped Sarpo was also doing great on his half.

Hope that kid’s doing alright in there...

Don’t just stand there!
Crystallize him!

Sarpo was dealing with the nonstop crystal knights shooting at him.

He was blasting them with his cybernetic canon in response. Even though he had been doing better since the days of staying with Carlos, he knew he couldn’t use his cybernetics too much.

Stand down, Sarpo!
Please... you don’t know what you are doing!

You don’t know what you are doing either, Cloe!
We have to end this madness once and for all!

You asked for it...

Cloe gives the order to continue shooting crystal blasts at Sarpo with tears in her eyes. But the constant back and forth suddenly stopped as everyone turned around to check out the giant explosion in the middle of the kingdom. It was Xtress unleashing his full raw power against the forces trying to stop him. He looked in front of him with a devilish smile, he was so close to the castle.

But suddenly, the faces he wanted to see the least showed up to stop him.

NO...

Hey, Xtress!
Miss us?

THE FISH AND THE REPTILE...
YOU WILL REGRET FACING AGAINST ME-

Yeah, yeah, whatever.
You always say that.

WHAT?!

Yeah, it’s just cliche now, dude.

YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO MAKE FUN OF ME!

Xtress put his hands on the ground for a charge attack. G and Bushra already knew about this move so they split up as always.

You are too slow!

RAGHH!

Hey stinky, why don’t you just teleport inside the castle or something?!

GRR…

Ooh, ooh, my turn!
* chuckles *
Maybe he was too dumb to figure that out!

ENOUGH!

Xtress teleported behind G to catch him off guard, but he crouched as Bushra punched Xtress on the face. They were perfectly in sync.

GAH!

Glad to know we didn’t miss a single beat after all this time.

Same here!

Xtress was getting more and more mad with each blow, he wasn’t going to be stopped by these two again! So, he decided on a different tactic. He teleported away, shocking Team Bushra as a whole. But when he teleported back, they saw Xtress next to a bunch of familiar faces.

I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO TELEPORT INSIDE THE CASTLE...
* Clenches his fists *
BUT I CAN DO... THIS!

Unlike last time when Xtress had to split himself to control the ex-hoodsters, he could just power them up while he was still on the battlefield. And so, the likeness of the Rascals, Survey... and a mysterious figure who still had their hoodster cloak on for some reason were teleported around the duo in a circle formation. Their color schemes turned to a bright red one just like the fight they had in front of Temple Skulled. It was a 6 against 2 fight now.

...shoot.

This is going to be a problem.

ATTACK!

And so, another battle had begun. G and Bushra split up to fight against the powered up ex-hoodsters. Bushra was distracting Markus and Survey while G was handling the rest with his hammer powers.

Come and catch me, you dorks!

Bushra was able to maneuver around the destroyed kingdom while Markus, Murray and Survey tried hitting him. Survey didn't have any projectiles to take care of, and Markus' crossbow shots were easy enough to manage for the time being.

Meanwhile, G was dodging Murray's bombs and Joyce's constant potions while the third guy was just following behind them. G thought of reflecting one of the bombs to throw Joyce off her game. Before he could do that however, he had to stop Xtress from getting inside the kingdom. He jumped in front of Xtress and pushed him away with his hammer whirlwind move.

GAH!
* Cleans his eyes *
YOU ANNOYING LITTLE...

Sorry but I can't let you get inside!

Afterwards, G wanted to try this new tactic he came up with on the spot against the two Rascals. When Murray threw the bomb towards G, he reflected it and threw it towards Joyce, leaving a huge explosion behind.

WOO HOO!
Score 1 for Team Bushra!

After the dust settled, G looked ahead to see if he was able to stop them for the time being. But instead, he was shocked to see not only Joyce not hurt at all, but also looking more powerful than before!

W-what?!

She was floating a little above the ground with a different color scheme than before.

HM... A POWERFUL EX-HOODSTER...
WHAT A LUCKY FIND!

(Crap.)

While Murray and the other guy were down for the count for now, G still had to deal with this new powered up form of Joyce alongside Xtress. G was struggling to keep up as a lucky blast from Xtress knocked him towards Bushra.

UGH!

G, you alright?!

Ugh...
* Holding his shoulder *
I-I don’t know!
I wasn’t expecting her to have new powers like this... we need to find

a new strategy!

Good idea!

Before Bushra could continue his sentence, G blocked a quick rapid jab attack from Joyce and responded with a hammer slam to the face.

This is getting out of control!

You said it!
* Trying to shoot Markus and Survey with the crystal gun *
Where is Hood anyways?!

Wait... yeah, you are right!
I didn't even notice!
* Looks around *
Just where the heck is she?!

I don't know but we will have to find some answers once we are done beating these guys to a pulp!

Meanwhile, the fight was still going on the rooftop. Midori and Henna joined with the Folio Bros. to stop the surrounding crystal knights while Artender was still trying to contact the outside forces.

This is so stressful!
* Hits a crystal knight with her shoulder *
How long do we have to keep this up?!

I’m not sure!

Theoretically, we can’t know for sure as Artender’s still working on the radio thing-

* Hits the crystal knight with a sleeping potion *
Not the time, bro.

We can’t lose any ground now!

Henna looks over to Artender.

How’s the progress?

I think I’m almost done!
* Moving the antennas *
ALMOST...

Henna throws one of her daggers towards a crystallized bird traveler to make them fall to the ground.

Nice shot!

Thanks!

Henna’s eyes widened as she noticed a crystal knight about to shoot Don from his back.

LOOK OUT!

And then silence. It was already too late.

D-Don?

Don suddenly turned his back with crystals stuck to his head. He started throwing potions towards the group to make them retreat. Afterwards, he started throwing potions at the walls to allow the other crystal knights to get inside.

N-NO!
DON!

Sorry bro, you will thank me later.

I GOT IT!

Artender shouted at the radio after the buzzing stopped.

Everyone, we need backup now!
We are at the Crystal Kingdom right now and we need everyone you can possibly find-

Before he could finish his sentence, a crystal knight crystallized the radio, leaving it completely useless. Artender backed away in fear as he realized they were cornered on the rooftop with his allies decreasing one by one. He saw Hattie getting crystallized in front of him and started panicking. He looked over to Henna and Midori, they had to get out of here NOW!

HENNA, GET US OUT NOW!

Henna opened her wings and tried flying away with Midori and Artender holding on to her legs. But due to her sheer speed, the bag Artender was carrying slipped away and fell to the ground in real time. Artender looked in horror underneath him.

HENNA, STOP!

WHAT, WHY?!

WHAT IS HAPPENING?!

TEO IS FALLING TO THE GROUND, WE HAVE TO-

But before he could finish his sentence, he heard the creaking sound of a crystal blast hitting somebody. In this case, it was none other than Henna Hawk herself.

Oh no no no...

The now crystallized Henna tried letting go of the two, but they were holding on for dear life.

Ms. Hawk, STOP!

Sorry guys but the queen’s rules!

M-Midori, I don’t think we are going to land safely now!
* Points at her *
In case something happens to me... I want you to find Teo and keep him safe!

B-but-

Before she could finish her sentence, the two started falling to the ground. Artender hit the grass while Midori was nowhere to be found. Artender’s vision was starting to get blurry from the damage he took. He looked around and saw a bunch of crystal knights heading towards him, including the Folio Bros and Henna. He shed a single tear and hoped his friends would save everyone before the inevitable happened.

In the middle of their fight however, Sarpo saw what happened to Artender and co. He had to do something drastic to save them.

Ma’am, he’s just standing there!

Okay?!
Then just crystallize him!

Alright, alright.

Sarpo didn’t say a word as he started blasting the wall Cloe and her crystal knights were standing on instead. He didn’t completely destroy the wall, but he created a big gap between the crystal knights and the entrance to the castle.

Crystallize a way into the castle!

Cloe looked as Sarpo took flight to somewhere instead.

This isn’t over yet, Sarpo...

“I will make you understand, my love.”

In the middle of his flight, Sarpo noticed Midori running away from a crowd of crystal knights with bruises all over her body. He swooped in to grab her at the last moment but noticed her covering her eyes.

Are you alright?

W-What...

Midori opened her eyes and saw Sarpo carrying her to a safe place. She took a deep breath of relief as she realized she was in the clear for now.

What happened over there?

T-they ambushed us and then...

Suddenly she remembered her mission and opened the backpack she was carrying. She picked up PotaTeo and showed him to Sarpo. PotaTeo was shaking in fear after what had happened.

The commander told me to protect him before he...

* sighs *

Yeah, I understand.

Sarpo turned his back and looked at the castle ahead of them.

Hopefully they won’t stay like this for too long if our plan goes accordingly.

Sarpo looked back once again and saw Midori trying to comfort PotaTeo.

There, there, potato kid...
It’s all going to be okay...
We are going to save your... dad, was it?

Yes.

Okay then...
* Takes a deep breath *
Yeah, we are going to save your dad soon!

You said it!
That’s the attitude we should be having!
* Readies his robotic arm *
We need to help Team Bushra defeat Xtress before this goes more out of control!
* Focuses his eyes and looks around *
I’m just trying to find where they are...

* Points at the giant explosion *
Could they be there?

Oh hey, good catch!
Now, come on!
We need to help them out!

Meanwhile, the battle with Xtress was getting worse by the minute. G was struggling to hold all of them off as Bushra couldn't do much without his powers. Xtress grinned at how pathetic G was and continued his path towards the castle.

N-NO!
* Blocks another one of Joyce's attacks *
BUSHRA, STOP HIM!

Bushra nodded and threw his fishing rod somewhere far away to hopefully get the same result... but this time, none of them were affected by it. The days of chasing after the fishing rod were over.

No...

G had to sit and watch as Xtress entered the castle. With one slip up, Joyce grabbed him by the hand and threw him to the nearest building. G didn't know how he was going to get out of this one.

Thankfully however, his half robot friend had arrived at the scene.

Sarpo!

Hi, G!

Sarpo noticed at the hoodster horde and started blasting them farther away from G.

Hold still, G!
I will try to get us out of here!

N-nevermind that!
* Points at the door *
Xtress got inside the castle!

HE WHAT?!

Yeah!
We need to chase after him now!

While the two were fighting against the powered up hoodsters, Bushra was talking with Midori.

Hello, do you need some help?

I would appreciate that, yeah.

What did you have in that bag?

Oh?
It’s just the Teo kid.
You know, the potato?

PotaTeo jumped out of the bag to hug his friend. He was happy to see Bushra again, crystallized or not! Weirdly enough however, Bushra’s

expression suddenly changed as he saw PotaTeo.

Woah, is everything alright?

Come to think of it... didn't PotaTeo have some of Xtress' powers? Wouldn't the Queen need him for that? And another thing... why was he helping these people anyway? They were trashing his new home. He looked around and saw all the destruction in front of him. The land he used to walk on was getting destroyed by the second. He saw Cloe and her crystal knights trying to reach the castle with their crystal ray guns. All this chaos, all this destruction... The Crystal Queen had the power to rebuild it all by herself. And to do that, she needed another more of Xtress' powers.

Before Midori could do anything, Bushra pulled out his crystallizer and crystallized Midori on the spot, much to her shock.

Sarpo and G were just wrapped up with dealing with the powered up hoodsters (Joyce especially was quite troublesome) but even they couldn't predict what was going to happen. They heard the creaking sound and turned their backs to see Bushra forcefully holding PotaTeo in his arms.

B-Bushra?!
What are you doing?!

Shush, G.
* Points the crystallizer towards PotaTeo *
The queen needs you and Teo's powers for her own gains.
* sighs *
And I can't let you destroy my home any longer.

Bushra are you crazy?!

I-I thought we had a bond!

Sorry guys but we can’t let you hurt the Crystal Queen.
* Snaps his fingers *
Bow girl or whatever your name is, please call for nearby crystal knight friends to take these two to the queen’s room.

I WON’T LET YOU GET AWAY WITH THIS YOU-

But before Sarpo could attack Bushra, he was hit by one of Hattie’s potions, making him feel dizzy. G couldn’t believe what was happening.

SARPO!

G ran towards the now dizzy Sarpo lying on the ground. He was trying his hardest to wake him up. He couldn’t fight off against all these crystal knights by himself.

I-I just don’t understand!
* Looks at Bushra *
Why are you doing this?!

...

YOU CAN’T EVEN SAY A THING??
* Tries standing up but to no avail *
WE WERE SO CLOSE TO WINNING, BUSHRA!
WHY DID YOU THROW IT ALL AWAY?!

...I’m sorry, G.
But think about it this way...we stick together no matter what.
And this... this is just a variation of that.
You told me that before, didn’t you?

G looked at Bushra with anger in his eyes. After all the struggles... they lost. And because of his best friend, no less. He screamed at the top of his lungs from anger to stop him, but he had the same fate as Sarpo shortly after.

Array and Maizie felt the castle shaking just a few minutes prior, but they were too busy fighting each other to question it for long.

You know...
I was wondering why you looked so familiar... I remember you!

Array dodged another attack from Maizie while she was still talking.

I tried to stop you from running away from your hoodster duties...
* Spins her staff around and casts another powerful spell *
We were both hoodsters once and yet... you still defy me!

Array does a backflip to dodge her crystal pillar attack and lands on his feet with one hand on the ground.

I didn’t become a tyrannical maniac when I ran away that day!
I changed!

* grins *
So did I!

Array hits the ground to cause a small earthquake as Maizie dodges it by creating a crystal pillar underneath her.

You did not have to do this!
You could have been free!
* Dodges an attack *
You could have made this world a better place with MPC2-

I WAS MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE ON MY IMAGE!
WITH MY RULE, EVERYONE WOULD HAVE LIVED IN PEACE AND HARMONY!

But you were brainwashing everyone in the process to obey you!
So much for “freedom”.
* Points at Maizie *
You are no different than *her*!

Maizie’s eyes suddenly widened in response.

S-SHUT UP!
YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT!

Array took advantage of her emotional state to knock her out of the pillar she was standing on with a punch to her chest. Maizie couldn’t block it in time and hit the castle’s walls with impact. She felt herself dying by the second. She couldn’t lose now... not when she was so close...

Array walked towards her with pity in his face. This was the same girl he once shared the same fate as. But they ended up being in the exact opposite places today. At first, he hesitated to kill her because of that reason. Maybe she could be a good guy in the future... just like him! But then, he remembered all the horrible actions she took to get to this spot in the first place. All the backstabbing, all the manipulation... she was far too dangerous for this world. And so, he raised his hand with the gauntlet to punch her for the kill.

But suddenly, he heard G’s screaming coming from the outside. He

suddenly lost track of what was going on. What happened to the love of his life?! In an ironic twist of fate, Maizie took advantage of Array's emotional state as well to crystallize his gauntlet first. Array was shocked beyond belief. His gauntlet fell to the ground and as he tried getting it up, he realized the gauntlet was too heavy now. What did she just do?!

W-what-

Sorry sweetie but...
* chuckles *
YOU. JUST. LOST!

Array tried fighting back as he was getting crystallized. He managed to get a hold of Maizie's necklace at the last second as he fully turned into a crystal knight. Maizie chuckled as she proved to everyone that no one could stop her!

My, my... weren't YOU a resilient one?

The now crystallized Array got up and instantly apologized to his new queen.

I-I'm sorry, my queen.
I don't know what came over me-

Ya da, ya da!
* Opens her hand *
Just give me the necklace now.

Array walked towards her to give Maizie the necklace but much to everyone's surprise, Xtress entered the room with a sinister smile. He had the perfect opportunity now.

W-WHAT?!
* Looks at the necklace *
GIVE ME THAT!

In the rush to quickly grab the necklace, she accidentally makes Array drop it to the ground. Maizie's eyes widened and made a run for the necklace herself.

N-NO, NOT NOW!
NOT NOW!
But it was too late, Xtress managed to get hold of Maizie before she could grab the necklace. He smiled at his prey and made room for himself in his vessel. The confused Array watched as Xtress possessed Maizie fully. At first, she fell to the ground with her eyes closed.

MY QUEEN!

Array rushed in to help her get up but instead, she started floating on her own. Her color scheme started to turn red as she slowly opened her eyes as a new being entirely.

Array watched in horror as the figure chuckled to themselves.

Such power.
Such energy.
I finally have it all for myself!

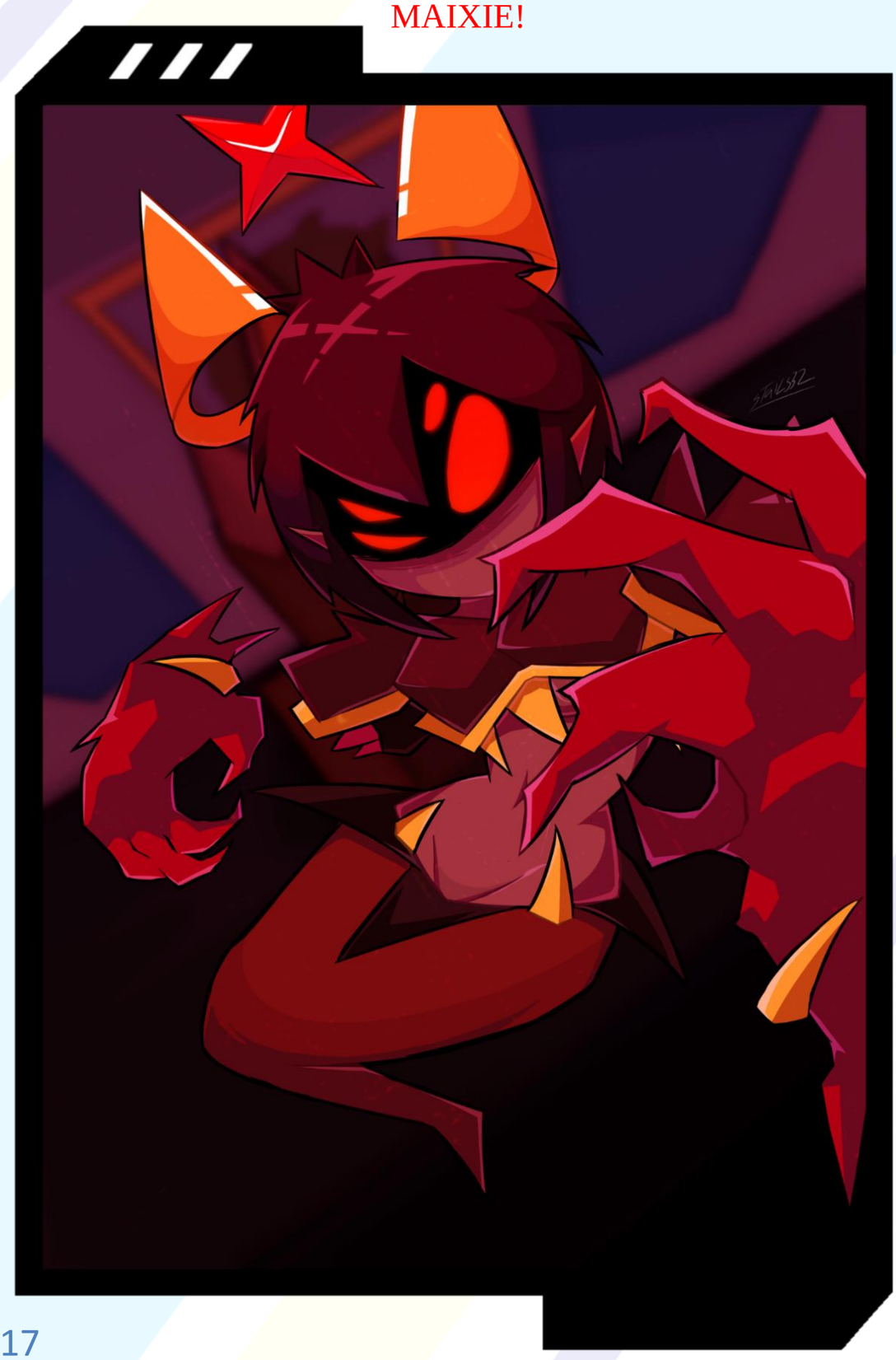
The figure stretched their arms to get a better look at their new form. It was perfect.

I'm no longer The Crystal Queen nor Xtress...

The figure telepathically grabbed Array to taunt him.

GACK!

I.
AM.
MAIXIE!



TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
MAIXIE'S GAMES
TURTLEDOODLE1
VIDDO3K

CHAPTER 39: MAIZIE'S GAMES

The past...

Can I take off this blindfold now?

No no, just wait for a few more seconds!

Okay...

Hm... there!
You can take it off now!

Alright.

Maizie takes off her blindfold and looks around herself. They were at their training hill again but this time, it was different. There was a picnic already setup for the two of them.

Ta-da!
Surprise!

Woah...

Do you like it?
I prepared it for us, hon.

Do I like it?
* Holds her head *
I LOVE IT!

Maizie climbs on Kyle's back and the two drop to the grass underneath them. The two chuckle together and then share a kiss.

I wanted to do something special for the 1st anniversary of us being a couple!
I'm so glad you enjoyed it!

I sure did!
* Pushes them away *
I can't believe you made me think we were going horse riding for the night!

Hey! You were getting close to finding out what I was planning so I had to make something up!

Yeah, yeah.
* Grabs the bread from the picnic blanket *
Mhm, this is so good!

Yeah, I got your favorite one from the bakery!

You are too sweet!

The two started eating while they watched the night sky filled to the brim with stars.

Man, I can’t believe you are one of the top royal guards now!

Yup, it’s hard to believe it actually happened!

The look on your teacher’s face was priceless!

Yeah, it’s what that jerk deserved after downplaying my skill for so long.
* stretches her back *
I wouldn’t mind taking a break for a bit though, I gave it my all back there.

That’s fair.

The two finished eating and then laid down to watch the stars together. While Kyle was more than happy, they wanted to tell Maizie one more thing too.

Maizie?

* looks at Kyle *
Yes, sweetie?

I really oughta thank you for so much.

Oh? How come?

You know.
For helping me defend myself against those bullies, helping me realize who I truly am and most importantly... being the love of my life.

Maizie smiled at her lover. The two had both grown so much since the first time they met.

Don’t mention it sweetie, we are in this together after all!

Hehe, yeah...

The two continued watching the stars. Suddenly, Maizie noticed a shooting star and pointed at it so that Kyle could see.

Kyle, Kyle, look!

Oh?

It’s a shooting star!
Make a wish now!

Maizie closed her eyes and made a wish. While Kyle looked at the shooting star as it disappeared into the dark sky shortly after.

Ah... that was fun!
* looks at Kyle *
What did you wish for?

I... didn’t.

Oh, is something wrong?
* raises her eyebrow *
You don’t believe in shooting stars or something?

No, it’s not that.
I just... I don’t know.
* looks at the sky again *
I just feel uneasy.
With the current rumors of those hooded figures... I just feel like something’s going to go wrong.

(also worried) H-hey, don’t think about that.
* holds Kyle’s shoulder *
No matter what happens, we will handle it together, right?

* smiles *
Right.

The two continued watching the night sky in its full beauty.

So, what did you wish for?

Oh, me?
Well...

Maizie leaned over to Kyle and kissed them on the cheek.

“I wished for this moment to last forever.”

Present day...

Move it, G!

* holding his arms up in the air *
I’m coming, I’m coming, geez!

After his betrayal, Bushra was keeping G, Sarpo and PotaTeo hostage, unknowing of what just happened inside the castle. The queen will be very satisfied, Bushra thought to himself. PotaTeo was trying to get away, but Bushra made sure to hold him still until they arrived at the throne room.

Hope you are proud of your decision, Bushra.
All of our hard work is undone, just because of your terrible decision making.

...I am proud of my decision, actually.

Uh huh...
* points at him *
Don’t you get it?!
Because of you, we won’t be able to stop Maizie anymore!

Oh, don’t give me that!
Why do you guys want her gone so badly anyways?!

I will show you why... with my FISTS!

Bushra manages to dodge Sarpo’s extendo-arm and looks at him with pity.

Not cool, man.
* points the crystallizer at PotaTeo *
One more funny move and he’s crystallized.
Are we clear?

Sarpo sighed and backed away. He couldn’t believe one of his closest friends was acting like this.

* snaps his finger *
Bow girl, keep Sarpo at bay!

* points at herself *
Is he referring to me?

Yeah, I thought that was pretty obvious.

Midori lightly hits Sarpo as a response. But by mistake, she hits his cybernetics instead, hurting her hand in the process.

OW!

Sarpo grinned, even at the tail end of their adventure, he wasn’t going to let the enemy have the final laugh. He looked around and noticed that G hadn’t talked back at all during all of this.

G?
You doing okay, buddy?

I... just don’t know what to say.

* looks at Sarpo in the eye *
I can’t believe we lost...

We still haven’t lost!
We are still standing after all!
* puts his hand on G’s shoulder *
Besides, maybe Array actually did succeed in his mission and he’s waiting for us inside!

I sure hope so...
I am really worried about him too.

And so, they entered the castle and painstakingly climbed up the stairs. The throne room was on the highest floor after all. G looked around this place again. It had been such a long time since he had been here. He escaped this place with the Tender Family and Bushra months ago. During those hard days, all G wanted was coming back here after saving his friends and family... not like that was going to happen anymore. On their way to the throne room, suddenly both Bushra and Midori held their heads in agony. Something was wrong.

W-what’s happening?!

Yeah, what’s the problem?

But the two didn’t respond. They continued on leading the two to the throne room without saying a single word. Something was definitely wrong, however. Once they reached the top floor, Sarpo was quick to realize that the throne room’s door was wide opened. And there was a strange... aura coming from the inside.

Oh no...
You don’t think-

* sighs *
Only one way to find out.

As they entered the throne room, they saw a terrifying view in front of them. The figure ominously sitting on the throne wasn't Maizie nor Xtress... it was something else entirely. Bushra and Midori both pushed G and Sarpo to the ground as they saw the figure grinning from teeth to teeth.

My, my...
* goes in a thinking position *
Sarpo and G, is it?
I can finally remember you guys' names now, thanks to this body...

Sarpo looked behind them and saw Midori and Bushra blocking the exit. There was nowhere else to go now. He helped G get up and tried to understand what they were dealing with.

I'm so glad you two could show up in time!
You are just in time for the show to begin!
* giggles *
You two can watch as I start destroying this planet to its very core!

G and Sarpo were terrified. They had to do something to stop this creature from destroying their home. Suddenly, G realized something. If Maizie was still around... where was Array?
As G looked further, he noticed the love of his life crystallized. G was going to lose it. Sarpo knew how G was feeling so he was ready to support him.

You...

Maixie was confused at G's reaction until they noticed him looking at the crystal knight next to them.

Aw... are you mad because of him?
* grins *
Poor thing is sad his “thunder boy” is now mine to control?

YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!

Before the figure could stand up, both G and Sarpo went on the offensive. But they were both stopped midair by the figure’s psychic abilities.

Trying to attack me when I’m monologuing, eh?
* chuckles *
You have not changed at all, Mr. Fields.

The figure launches the two towards the nearby wall. Sarpo was able to stop his momentum in the air and caught G before he had some serious damage.

Still valuing others’ lives more than yours?
That’s going to be your downfall... just like all the other times.

Save it Maizie... Xtress... or whatever you are!

Maixie chuckles and starts slowly walking in circles around the two.

I’m not Xtress anymore, I’m not Maizie either.
* grins *
I’m something else entirely!

Oh yeah?
* holding his head *
Well, that’s not something to be proud of!
Two meanies combined into one, big deal!

Maixie looks at G with annoyance.

I wouldn’t be so cocky if I were you.

* whispers *
G, please.
We should come up with a plan first-

No!
I’m done running away from my problems!
* points at Maixie *
You ruined everything!

G takes a few steps back and summons his hammer. He wasn’t going to give them the satisfaction of him and his allies’ suffering.

I will fight against you ‘till the very end!

Maixie’s eyes widened. They were not expecting a reaction like this from G of all people. But their surprised expression didn’t last long as they started grinning. G didn’t understand why they were smiling but he would find out the hard way shortly after.

You will respect the queen!

At the last moment, G blocked Array’s gauntlet attack with his hammer and looked at his boyfriend in pain.

Array, please stand down!

Sarpo was about to help him out but G told him to stop midway through him charging an attack. This was personal.

* looks at Array*
Array, listen to me.
I don’t want to do this!

* points at G *
If you didn’t, you wouldn’t be fighting against me!

Hahaha!
* slams their staff to the ground *
You are almost going to make feel pity because of how pathetic you truly are!
All that big talk and you still can’t hurt a loved one!

Maixie reaches out their arm to stop Array from attacking G. They clearly had more plans for the two than just a straight up duel.

W-what?!
* waves his hand in front of Array’s face *
What happened?!

He won’t be fighting you much longer... until I want him to, that is.

What’s your plan now then, Xtress?!
Destroy the planet like you wanted to for hundreds of years?

Oh my, you catch on quick!
* sits back on the throne *
Actually yes, that was my plan.
* points at themselves *
Now that I have this perfect body, (maybe minus the hair), I can destroy this planet in ease!

Why do you even do this?!
* opens his arms *
Ever since the beginning, you tried destroying Perdiah!
But why?!
There has to be a reason!

You REALLY want to find out?!

Maixie raised their left arm to choke G in the air.

LET HIM GO!

I was once a GOD, boy.
I have waited years to be freed from that stupid dimension... only for humanity to use me as a tool!
* grips their fist harder *
This planet is filled with corrupted people and I will have to pleasure of reshaping it in my own image!

G was struggling to breath with every passing second. He had to do something!

With my already powerful sorcery and this girl’s crystal army, I will

annihilate every single living being on this planet in a matter of a few days!
I won’t destroy this planet; I’ll wake it up!
* looks at G *
Is that understood?!

G could hardly nod with the constant pain he felt around his neck. Maixie made him go shortly after. Sarpo quickly rushed in to help G out.

You know, it would be SO simple to just crystallize you three and start my conquest... but I want to have one last moment of fun before I get to business!

W-
* coughs *
What do you mean?!

Maixie snapped their fingers as a bunch of old allies and enemies appeared in front of them. The Rascals, Survey, the mysterious hoodster, Midori, Henna, The Folio Bros, you name it! Since Bushra got teleported alongside them, PotaTeo was now freed. He quickly rushed towards Sarpo and G for comfort. Sarpo spotted Cloe in the middle of the crowd and angrily looked at her. PotaTeo saw his family, one crystallized and the other under mind control about to attack them. He jumped onto G’s arms for comfort. G tried joking around to calm himself down.

R-really, that’s the challenge?!
* fake laughs *
You tried the same thing outside just a few hours ago!

Maybe I did, maybe I didn’t.
* grins *
I just want to see how pathetic you all are by fighting your loved

ones!
Surely it must drive you crazy, haha!

(Okay... we might take them out if we split up...)

Oh! I almost forgot!

Maixie got up from their throne and threw away the cape they were wearing to show off their crystal arm in full.

I will be supporting my minions unlike that pathetic freak Maizie!

G, Sarpo and PotaTeo went to their battle stances. This was going to be rough, but it was the best chance they had.

Before Maixie sent the command to battle, something strange happened. Maixie held their chest and coughed a bit of blood.

...what?

Maixie looked at the blood on their hand in confusion. What was happening with this body?!

* looked at their minions *
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
ATTACK!

The two watched as the army started running towards them. G and Sarpo already took down most of these guys before so they wanted to try a similar tactic.

I’ll take the left; you take the right.

Got it.

Before they could attack however, they saw PotaTeo wanting to help the two.

It is too dangerous out here, Teo!
I promised your father I would keep you safe!

But PotaTeo didn’t want to hide anymore. He was willing to stop this madness even if it meant he could get crystallized. He looked at Sarpo and shook his head. He was determined.

* sighs *
As you wish.

Sarpo took a few steps to the back to charge up an attack.

Good luck, Sarpo.

Good luck to you two as well.

And so, the battle had begun.

Sarpo finished charging up his attack and blew the others away with his manual windbox attack. This would give them plenty of time to fight back.

G decided to deal with the crystal knights first. Artender and Henna tried grabbing him by the legs but he was able to avoid them with his hammer jump. In midair, G charged up a whirlwind to stun them for some time. He then landed on the ground and pushed the crystal

knights away. He was trying his hardest to not think about the fact that they were all his friends.

He saw the Folio Bros healing up the group. G knew he had to take them down first, otherwise they weren't going to win this battle anytime soon. He rushed towards the two and tripped them with his leg. The Folio Bros threw a sleeping potion at G but with G's careful dodging, it hit Henna instead. G noticed Hattie saying "Oops" with Don angrily looking at him. G pushed the two with another whirlwind attack.
Three down, four to go.

Meanwhile, Sarpo was fighting against the ex-hoodsters. He noticed Emily biting him on the legs and gently pushed her away from the others. He wasn't going to hurt a little girl. But the Rascals? They were fair game.

I remember you three!
You are going to pay for ruining my vacation!

Sarpo raised his robotic arm and transformed it to a laser blaster. He was dying to use this for the longest time. And it seemed like they weren't expecting this either as he noticed the guy with the blue hair running away from the scene with tears in his eyes.

The Rascals still pushed on the offensive. They were just as determined as Sarpo was. But as time went on, Sarpo started to struggle with defending himself. There were just too many attacks coming from all sides. One lucky arrow shot from Markus malfunctioned Sarpo's flying capabilities. Sarpo looked around himself in pain as the Rascals went in for the kill. But PotaTeo saved Sarpo by growing in size and pushing them all away. Sarpo couldn't believe his eyes.

TEO?!

PotaTeo looked back at Sarpo with happiness and continued shooing away the ex-hoodsters away from them.

Phew... that was too close for comfort!

Suddenly, Sarpo noticed Maixie casting a spell onto PotaTeo to push him away from the ex-hoodsters. Maixie wasn't crystallizing either of them yet but they still wanted a good fight nonetheless. Sarpo rushed towards PotaTeo to help him get up but he quickly realized that they were surrounded.

Back to G, he was dealing with the remaining crystal knights: Midori, Artender, Cloe and Array. He dodged Midori's sword attacks and threw her towards Artender as a distraction. He had a lot of apologizing to do after they saved the day. He noticed Cloe changing her target and going after Sarpo instead. G looked at Sarpo's whereabouts and saw him and PotaTeo being cornered by Maixie and the ex-hoodsters.

G started to panick. He wasn't going to let them down, not after everything that went down. He threw his hammer towards Maixie to distract them just long enough so that Sarpo and PotaTeo got back on their feet.

YES!
* raises his hand with a fist *
Good luck guys!

But before he could celebrate even more, Array punched him away with a gauntlet attack. G hit the wall really hard and held his shoulder in pain. He got up as quickly as he could before Array could land another hit on him. G held his hammer with his non messed up arm to fight against Array.

Array...

G...

There was no need for talk. The two lovers already knew what they

had to do. They started fighting against each other with everything they got. Array tried hitting G with the gauntlet but G avoided it with a hammer jump. G charged up his hammer in the air and threw his hammer towards Array. Array was able to block the attack by holding onto his gauntlet. After the attack, G's hammer returned to him like a boomerang.

It was now Array's time to attack. He hit the ground with his gauntlet to cause an earthquake. G was able to dodge Array's earthquake attack with another hammer jump. He landed on the ground but before he could do anything, he was trapped by one of Maixie's crystal spells. He tried moving his body while being stuck between the crystal pillars, but he wasn't strong enough to break through.

Ah...finally!
* slowly floats towards him *
I have been waiting for this moment for the longest time!

W-What do you mean?!

Well, let's just say...
* chuckles *
You have something that belongs to me!

Before G could escape, it happened. Maixie put her finger on G's forehead and started absorbing his power for themselves. Once he was able to see clearly again, G was horrified to realize that he lost his powers... again.

There we go!
* smiles *
That's more like it!

Maixie summons two hammers to flex on G's heartbroken self. G couldn't believe what had just happened. After everything he went

through... he was right back at the beginning. Powerless to stop anyone.

Well then.
Now that I got back what's mine...
* points the staff at G *
I don't have a use for you no more!

Maixie started charging up another crystal move to crystallize G and once for all.

See you on the other side, freak!

NO!

G closed his eyes at that moment, going on out a somber but also happy note, knowing that he and his friends tried their best at saving their world. But before the crystal beam could hit him, another person took the shot for him instead. G opened his eyes and was shocked to see a crystallized Sarpo instead.

(also confused) Woah, now THAT was unexpected... is what I would say if you weren't SO PREDICTABLE!

Maixie pushed the crystallized Sarpo away with a spell. He wasn't going to ruin this for them. G looked at the crystallized Sarpo trying to get up in sadness. He gave away his freedom... just to save him. And it didn't even matter at the end. He was going to get crystallized anyways!
Now just him and PotaTeo remained. Once they were gone too, they would lose everything. Just dealing with Maizie and Xtress solo was bad enough. But with everyone else here as well? It was practically impossible.

G tried to make a run for it to the exit until Maixie stopped him with a

fiery punch. G rolled away from the attack but instead, hit his back on a crystal stuck on the castle walls.

ACK!

HAHA!
You thought you could escape that easily, huh?

G tried to push himself away from the line of fire by holding onto the crystal on the wall. Surprising him however, the crystal had a faint red color on it when he was holding onto it.

What the-

Before he could process what was going on, Maixie hit G on the chest with a kick, launching him to the other side of the room. He could barely breathe after that. He looked around in pain and saw PotaTeo cornered by a bunch of crystal knights and ex-hoodsters. He didn't stand a chance either.

G watched in sadness as Maixie charged another crystallization spell towards him. In the last few moments of his life, he wanted to think of simpler times.
Them going on a worldwide adventure to destroy Xtress, him meeting with Bushra and the others for the first time, saving his boyfriend from dying etc. All his memories were flashing in front of him in rapid succession... but one of them stuck out to him the most.

Back when they were stuck inside Cave Inertia, they found a strange grey colored door. They were getting chased around by hoodsters in that maze like cave. Since they didn't have any other option, they decided to enter it. It was such a bizarre experience, looking back. They went through many weird looking rooms and managed to escape the crystal room... wait.

G's eyes suddenly widened. Could it be? He and Bushra held those crystals with their bare hands for a bit, resulting in those crystals

turning red and then exploding. Not to mention him turning the nearby crystal red just by holding onto it... Could this have really ben the solution all along...

TEO!

PotaTeo looked at G with tears in his eyes. He wasn't really doing good himself either.

Teo, listen to me!
Grab ahold of the crystals stuck on people's heads and don't let go!

PotaTeo seemed confused if anything.

Please!
You are our only-
AHHHH!

Before he could finish his sentence, he was crystallized just like the rest of his friends. PotaTeo started tearing up after the fact but knew he had to try what G said to him before he was caught. And perhaps maybe... this was his time to shine!

That... was strange.
I wonder what that was about-

Maixie noticed PotaTeo with an angry expression. He wanted to avenge everyone he knew and loved.

Ooh, what's wrong little man?
You want to join the rest?!
* points their staff at PotaTeo *
Happy to oblige!

PotaTeo took advantage of the situation as he jumped away at the last second from their attack.

Peh, lucky dodge.

Maixie continued casting the spells towards PotaTeo but he used his friends and enemies in the room to bounce off them. He had to reach Bushra before it was too late.

NO!
SOMEONE GET AHOLD OF THAT POTATO!

After a few more jumps, PotaTeo managed to find Bushra and hugged the crystal on his head.

W-What are you doing?!
* trying to pick up PotaTeo *
Let me go!

Before Bushra could throw PotaTeo away, the crystals on his head started glowing, just like PotaTeo predicted! Maixie covered their eyes to avoid the blinding light, only to see Bushra de-crystallized and just as confused.

H-huh?
Wh-where am I?!
* notices PotaTeo *
Teo?! What's going on?!

IMPOSSIBLE!
HOW... HOW DID YOU DECRYSTALLIZE ONE OF MY KNIGHTS?!

Maixie was about to cast a spell towards the two to make sure this would end at that moment but before they could, they coughed up blood on the ground again. Maixie fell while holding their heart in pain.

W-what's happening to this body?!

Aha!
Take that you... sorceress slash queen slash bad man... thing.
* looks at PotaTeo *
Did I do good?

PotaTeo rolled his eyes and gave him a passing score. He pointed at the other crystal knights in the room afterwards.

Uh... what do you mean?

Potateo sighed(?) and tried explaining with everything that went down with sign language.

Ooh, I see!
So, you are saying you can turn our friends back to normal?

PotaTeo quickly nodded. He was actually pretty surprised that Bushra got it right in his first try. They saw the crystal knights; Cloe, Midori, Henna and The Folio Bros readying their crystallizers.

Oh boy, that don't look good!

Maixie was struggling to get up as they noticed PotaTeo freeing the crystal knights one by one. It was a chaotic sight to behold. Everyone was fighting each other, getting crystallized/decrystallized, you name it! Bushra was distracting the ex-hoodsters in the meantime.

Whoops, sorry for this, Artender!
* picks up Emily *
Here’s your kid, that will be 30 bucks!

Bushra dodges Artender’s punch but just briefly.

I-It’s fine, you can pay later too!

PotaTeo first jumped on Sarpo’s head to decrystallize him. A brief flash of light appeared as Sarpo was freed.

W-what happened?!
Where’s Cloe?!

PotaTeo gently pointed at Cloe running towards them with a crystallizer at hand.

Oh dear-

Sarpo took off in the air and started spinning in circles with PotaTeo on his back.

What did you guys do?!
Did you find a cure or something?!

PotaTeo shrugged. Clearly, he didn’t know the exact reason either but it worked so he wasn’t going to complain now!

I see!
* points underneath them *
So, we better get everyone changed back before that monster gets up!

WHY. AREN'T. YOU. WORKING?!

Maixie was ripping their hair out in anger. This didn't make sense. They couldn't stand up without feeling pain, let alone stop the potato from ruining their plans.

(I can still call for my army to crystallize them...)
(Of course!)
(We still outnumber them!)
(We can still-)

But suddenly, Maixie heard sounds of a trumpet playing outside. Maixie looked outside from the broken window and saw a huge army headed to the Crystal Kingdom. The cavalry had arrived! So many Travelers and humans were heading to the kingdom with horses while some were following behind them with other type of vehicles.

NO, IMPOSSIBLE!
Where did they come from?!

Maixie tried standing up but instantly fell to the ground again. The pain was unmatched.

RAGHHH!
* still holding their heart *
WORK YOU STUPID BODY, WORK!

Stop in the name of the-

PotaTeo jumped on Hattie's head and decrystallized him on the spot.

Ouch...
* holds his head *
That hurt...

Hattie cleared his eyes and when he realized what was going on around him, he started to panic.

What on Perdiah is going on around here?!

Hattie looked to his left and saw his brother about to crystallize him again.

Don! Listen to me!
* reaches out for a potion *
Don’t do this!

Sorry Hattie but the queen’s rules-

Before he could also finish his sentence, PotaTeo decrystallized him too in an instant.

* raises his eyebrow *
You were saying?

Don’t... don’t tell that to anyone.

The two checked their pockets and readied their potions for a counterattack. But before they could do so, they saw Midori getting decrystallized next to them.

Oh!

* waves his hand *
Hello Midori!

Welcome back from being a crystal knight!

(...I wish I stayed crystallized.)

What’s going on?!

Artender quickly shook his head and looked around after his decrystallization. There was chaos everywhere.

We decrystallized you!

SARPO?!

Don’t worry!
Just stay calm!

O-okay.
* looks around *
W-Where are the kids?!

I don’t know where Emily is but Teo...

(scared) W-What about Teo?

Sarpo pointed at the chaos in front of them. Artender saw PotaTeo

decrystalizing folks while they were fighting back against the ex-hoodsters. PotaTeo was just done decrystallizing Henna.

Woah, that was unpleasent!
* cheers PotaTeo *
Thank you kindly, little potato man.
Our clan will cherish your name ‘till the end of time!

* smiles *
Well, what do you think?

* wipes off his tears *
I couldn’t be any prouder...

Artender waved at PotaTeo in the mist of everything that was going on. He was able to see how proud his dad was for a brief moment before continuing to save others.

I will try to find Emily to make sure nothing bad happens to her.
* puts his hand on Sarpo’s shoulder *
Good luck with... her.

...thank you.

Sarpo looked at his back and saw the love of his life staring at him with a blank expression. So, it all came to this, Sarpo thought to himself. He was going to save the love of his life one way or another. He looked at Henna and PotaTeo, they had a plan in mind already.

Henna started flying around the building to distract Cloe while Sarpo grabbed PotaTeo and launched him towards her head. She was now free just like the rest of them.

W-what...

Cloe looked around herself in confusion. She thought she was hallucinating after seeing Sarpo alongside her childhood best friend.

S-Sarpo?!
* squints her eyes *
...Henna?!

Cloe was worried that Sarpo would be angry with her after she spilled out their plans to Maizie and the others but instead...

It’s okay, sweetie.
I’m here.

Sarpo walked towards Cloe to hug her. It was hard to believe what just happened. At first, she was hesitant but soon, Cloe hugged him back.

I missed you so much sweetie.

I missed you too...
Let us never split apart ever again!

And so, Sarpo kissed Cloe on the lips, much to Henna’s weirded out reaction.

Wait... you were referring to Cloe this whole time?!

Y-yeah?

I thought you had a human girlfriend or something!

Sarpo blushes out of embarrassment.

(sarcastically) Happy to see you too, Henna.
* reaches out her hand *
It has been such a long time, hasn't it?

* smiles *
Sure has.

Happy to see you here around these parts.

Don't mention it, Cloe.
I am happy to report that my clan is still doing great!

That's awesome to hear!

Sarpo watched as the two previous best friends hugged it out. He noticed Array fighting against the crystallized G to get him to listen. PotaTeo was there to thankfully decrystallize him. Once it was over, G looked around himself in confusion.

W-where am I?
* looks around *
Is this… heaven?

G!

Before G could realize what was going on, Array jumped at him as the two fell to the ground together.

Woah, what's the problem, thunder boy?!

I thought you were a goner, bun bun!
* kisses him on the cheek *
I'm so glad you are okay!

Ugh... that's enough of watching lovebirds from me.
Yuck!

And whoop!

Bushra trips Murray down and throws him towards Markus and Survey to distract them.

This is almost too easy!

But Bushra didn't take one of the Rascals into account. His eyes widened as he looked behind him, just to see Joyce about to bombard him with potions.

You know, that makes more sense.

Bushra started running away from Joyce's endless barage of potions.

Gah, you were always my least favorite out of the three!
* dodges the potions *
A little bit of help?!

We got you!

And so, Sarpo and the rest of his friends fought off against the mind controlled ex-hoodsters. At least for a bit!

STOP!

What, why?!

Emily’s with them!
I can’t let her get hurt!

Y-yeah, please don’t hurt anyone!

Huh?
What’s with you two?

We think, one of them...
* points at the girl in the lab coat *
-is our sister!

WHAT?!

The ex hoodsters were gaining ground once again. They had to be stopped.

Okay then...

* raises his arm *
Change of plans, everybody!
We just push them back!
Don’t harm them!

Everyone yelled “Got it” out of sync once again and pushed the ex hoodsters outside the throne room.

Meanwhile, Maixie was starting to lose control of their body. Her eyes turned white for a split second as Xtress left Maizie’s body in a powerless state. The pain was just too much to handle. Maizie opened her eyes and looked at the chaos around her. Her inner voice continuously shouted “no”, this wasn’t how it was supposed to end!

Maizie held her head in pain and saw Xtress lying on the ground, powerless. This was her chance.

YOU...
* tries to get up *
YOU INSIGNIFICANT LITTLE-

Before Xtress could finish his threats, Maizie casted a spell on Xtress to stun him in place. She held her chest in pain. Now it was time to do what she wanted to do from the very beginning.

Once every ex-hoodster was out, Sarpo looked back and saw Maizie casting a spell on Xtress. He was confused, why wasn’t she attacking them?

G-guys?!

What’s wrong?

Maizie is trying to do something!
We have to stop her!

Maizie overheard his shouting and right before they could reach her, she covered around herself and Xtress with crystal pillars. Now they were both stuck inside with nowhere to go.

DANG IT!
* looks around *
Guys, this is the final stretch!
Come on, we can do this!
* punches the crystal pillar with his cybernetic hand *
Help me tear this thing open!

Right behind you, sweetie!

Not sure if my daggers are strong enough to leave a dent but I will do my best!

* holds G's hand *
You got it, Mr. Fields!

* blushes *
Y-yup!

Let's kick some crystal queen butt!

Yip yip!

We gotta find you a better catchphrase after this...

* holding PotaTeo *
We have got your back, always.

Boy, what a joy.

And so, everyone nodded and went to work. G and Bushra were kicking it since they didn't have their powers, Array was punching it repeatedly with his gauntlet, The Folio Bros were throwing whatever potions they had at the thing, Midori was trying to slice it open etc. They had to reach her before something drastic happened.

Meanwhile, Maizie was continuing to cast her spell onto Xtress. She could hear the cracking sounds coming from the outside, they were all trying to reach her. Xtress' once lively red color suddenly vanished as he become entirely white. Maizie took a deep breath afterwards as her glowing red eyes reflected on the crystals covering her. After such a long time, she was able to think clearly again. She looked at the crystal pillars in shame. She covered her eyes with her crystal hand and sat down. She didn't know where to begin.

She started this whole thing to prove Hood was in the wrong but instead... she became just like her. She abused so many people on the way to getting what she wanted, just like her. Perhaps Sarpo really was right. Things could have turned for the better if she didn't plot out this overly complicated scheme, resented MPC2 and biggest of all... knew the side effects of using this kind of power.

But it was too late now. She could tell she didn't have much time left in this world. Even if she surrendered now, she was going to perish not long after. Not to mention every awful thing she did towards others. Her heart's been beating slower and slower since Xtress took control of her body. She wasn't even seeing things clearly anymore.

Maizie reached out to her pockets and pulled out a picture of her and the love of her life. She did all of this for them after all. She started tearing up as she realized what she had to do before she said goodbye to this world.

Maizie stood up and pointed her staff towards Xtress. This was going to be risky but she knew this was her only chance. She started transferring over Xtress' powers to her next spell as her eyes became normal like before. She started casting a spell;

"When there's darkness, there's light.
Ignore the light and reignite the darkness!
Save the one I desire the most!"

And then, a brief moment of silence.

As she finished her spell, a brief flash of light, combined with a powerful energy wave afterwards, covered the entire planet. It destroyed all the crystals on Perdiah, essentially freeing every crystal knight in the process. It also caused a small explosion on its center point, causing everyone trying to get in to get launched back.

G was barely able to open his eyes after the fact. Once he got up and cleared his eyes, he saw his friends helping each other get up.

Ugh... my head...

G?!
* puts the rock back in its place *
Are you alright?!

Y-yeah, I'm fine, Array.
* looks at his hand *
I feel... strange.

Screw that!
* hugs him *
I'm just glad you are okay!

* tears up *
M-me too.
* looks at his hand again *
Let me try something.

Okay...

G focused on summoning his hammer and sure enough, he was able to summon his hammer again.

Woah...

My powers returned back to me...
So, if that’s the case...

G looked back where Maizie used the spell, it was hard to tell what was there with the dust clouds covering the air.

What happened to Xtress?

G and Array looked around themselves and saw their friends looking underneath them through the broken window. They saw people outside looking at each other all confused with broken crystals everywhere. The whole group had battle scars but G was certain the Folio Bros would take care of them sooner than later.

I-Is it-

Yeah, it’s finally over.

And so, the group started celebrating. The nightmare was finally over! G noticed Bushra manipulating the water from a nearby broken pipe to play around with the kids. He got his powers back too it seemed.

Yeee, this is so fun!
* lands on her dad's shoulders *
You did it, dad!

No...
* kisses Emily on the forehead *
We did it, little one.

Yay!

And of course...

Artender picked up PotaTeo. He seemed so giddy.

My son saved us all from that maniac queen!

Everyone cheered on for PotaTeo. He was so happy! But then, he noticed G looking a little upset. So, he pointed at G too.

Wait, huh?

They all looked at G at the same time which made him turn red out of embarrassment. He really wasn't used to this attention.

You are saying that G told you what to do?
PotaTeo nodded. And so, the group started celebrating G as well!

T-thank you?
I-I don’t know if I’m okay with this…

G felt someone holding him by the shoulders.

It’s fine, bun bun.
I will be waiting for you here.

Yeah, just relax man!
You earned it!

Array and Bushra’s words gave G the confidence to take some pride on his accomplishments. He and PotaTeo really did save the day!

T-thank you everybody!
* wipes off his tears *
I’m so happy to be with you again after such a long time!

They shared the credit together as they started celebrating. But G was still feeling uneasy. He had to make sure Maizie or some other force didn’t run away from them like all the other times.

E-excuse me, I need to check something!

What is it?

I’m gonna check if Maizie or someone else is still there!

But G, it’s too dangerous!

There might be holes everywhere!
You might fall!

I will take that risk!

G went ahead as everyone else looked at him all confused. They were going to wait until the dust settled to check up over there but G didn't want to take any risks anymore. He reached there first and looked behind him. They were still celebrating their victory. G chuckled to himself. It seemed like things were about to go back to normal. But what he saw would change the course of Perdiah forever.

He saw two figures standing next to each other, but he couldn't exactly tell their silhouette from all the clouds of dust. As G walked closer, he saw a crystal statue version of Maizie alongside a person mourning for her loss. He saw this person's right arm being replaced with one of Xtress' monster arms. He could faintly hear the figure mourning over Maizie's death.

Oh sweetie... what did you do...

And then... it clicked. G's eyes widened as he realized who this person was. It... it can't be. No person with their life essence removed should have been able to come back to Perdiah... until now.

W-Who are you?

The figure looked behind them with fear in their eyes.

I'm Kyle Lawrence.
And just what the heck is going on here?!

COVER
A
TURTLE'S
EXPEDITION
RESCRIBBLED
#2
THEIR CHOICE
TURTLEDOODLE1
ENDIEMID

COVER

B

THEIR CHOICE

TURTLEDOODLE1

MIDASGOLDGUYIDK1

COVER

C

THEIR CHOICE

TURTLEDOODLE1

SOHEKUN

COVER D

TURTLE'S EXPEDITION REScRIBBLED

THEIR CHOICE

TURTLEDOODLE1

TURTLEDOODLE1 BUT WITH A MUSTACHE

CHAPTER 40: THEIR CHOICE

Ugh...

In the mist of everything that was going on, Markus woke up and looked around himself with a headache. When he finished looking at his surroundings, he was even more confused than before. Where even were they? What happened?

The last thing he could remember was him and his team visiting abandoned places on Perdiah with their hover bike, The Troubling Sky! They were going to rob those places for cash and useful material... at least that was their plan before they all lost their consciousness.

They were on a destroyed castle's top floor. There were holes everywhere that they could fall into. Markus backed away with a worried expression and bumped into the pillar behind him. He heard sounds of running coming from not so far away. He squinted his eye and noticed familiar faces in the crowd. Those MPC2 freaks were here, of course, Markus thought to himself. Eugh. He never needed their help, and he certainly wouldn't need them now!

He looked at his sides and saw his teammates lying on the floor, unconscious. The sooner they got out of there, the better. He shook Murray and Joyce to wake them up.

Hey, get up you vermin!

Ugh...
* looks around *
What the heck happened?

* holding his head *
Where are we...

Gah! Who cares?!
* points at the people running *
MPC2 peeps are here!
We need to get a move on already!

Huh?

The heck’s those jokers doing around these parts?

I don’t know but we will figure it out... eventually!
Now come on!

B-but-

What?!

How about we... don’t run away this time?

Huh?
* puts his hand on his chin *
What are you suggesting here?

I don’t know... m-maybe they might help us!
* points at Array *
That kid... he used to be an ex-hoodster... just like us!
If they were able to forgive him, perhaps we could also-

You can’t be serious.

I-I mean... just think about it-

Forget it!
Those guys are just nothing but trouble!
* looks around *
Isn’t that right, Joyce?

But no response came, much to Markus’ surprise. He looked around for Joyce but notices her also looking at the crowd... but with an unexpected expression; confused. Markus was irritated beyond belief.

Oh, for the love of-
* covers his face *
Come on, Joyce!
We need to go!

...

JOYCE!

Yeah... let’s go, boss- man.

That’s more like it!

And so, Joyce followed after the two as they ran away from the hero group. She was looking at her brothers that whole time, wondering why they were here in the first place. And most importantly, why

they seemed so... happy. But in the end, it didn’t really matter. She shrugged it off and went on to continue her life as a wanted criminal. Just how she liked it. She looked at her group with a smile, ready for another adventure.

G couldn’t believe what he was seeing. No... this had to be some sort of trick by Maizie. It just had to be! But if this was somehow real... how? How did she manage to do this? How did she manage to resurrect Kyle themselves...

D-Don’t freak out.
* raises his hands *
I-I’m a friend.

No... I remember you!
* backs away a few steps *
You knocked me out once!

(Ooh, right.)
(I did do that once, didn’t I?)

G-Get away from me!

While backing away, Kyle noticed one of their arms have changed into a weird monster arm and starts freaking out.

AGGH! WHAT?!
WHAT HAPPENED TO MY ARM?!
* looks at G *
Did you do this?!

N-No!

You must be lying!
You... you have to be!
* looks at their monster arm again *
What’s happening to me...

Look.
I don’t understand what’s going on either but you NEED to calm down.
I can’t help you otherwise.

Help?!
I don’t need your help!

Please, make this easy for yourself!

Go... AWAY!

Kyle points their monster arm towards G and shot a laser through it. G was able to block the attack with his hammer at the last moment with a shocked expression on his face.

Wha-
How did you do that?!

Kyle looked at their arms with fear in their eyes.

I- I don’t know!

Just as things were about to get more hectic, G saw a familiar face floating towards him.

G, what the heck is going on?!
We heard an explosion and-
Hey, what are you pointing at?

Sarpo looks at G's direction and sees Kyle looking at him with fear.

What.

Sarpo takes off his shades and clears his eyes.

G, what did you do?!

Me?!
I didn't do anything!
* looks at Kyle *
Right?

Y-yeah!
Not that I recall!

Kyle backed away a bit as Sarpo tried finding out what exactly was going on.

H-hey, back off, mate!
* takes a few steps back *
I will not hesitate to fight back!

Please stop pretending to act menacingly.

You are really terrible at it.

Kyle frowned as a response. Sarpo grabbed their monster arm to investigate the situation even further.

This is... strange.

What part of this ISN’T strange?!

...good point.
* turns the monster arm around *
Hm... this looks oddly familiar.

Sarpo backed away from Kyle and looked at the two.

Yeah, that settles it.

Kyle looked at Sarpo with a worried expression on their face. They were scared of what Sarpo was going to say.

You are... Xtress.
Kind of.

WHAT?!

What does that even mean?!

Will you two just relax already?!
* sighs *

I am not %100 sure myself.
This is just the most likely theory I got.

What do you mean by me being... “Xtress”?

Well-

Suddenly, the three of them all looked back after hearing a loud shouting coming from behind them. A figure with blue hair was standing on top of a high place, made with rubbish from the fights inside, shouting at their friends with a hoodster next to him.

Woah...

Who is that?

S-Survey?!

Aha!
It is I, my friends!
* bows *
Now that the Crystal Queen is gone... I, Mike Survey, will be your new ruler!

Everyone looked at him with question marks in their heads.

Uh... who are you again?

WHAT?!
* takes a few steps to the front *
How come you people not know about “Mike Survey”?

Does that name ring any bells?

Not really, no.

GRRR...
* looks at the hoodster next to him *
Minion! Am I well known or not?!

Sir, can you please let me go...

GRR... FINE!

Survey drops off the innocent hoodster from the rubble.

Useless, useless!

Survey looked around for someone... ANYONE who recognized him. But then, he saw Array, the one person who surely couldn’t have forgotten about the glorious hoodster savior himself, Mike Survey!

Hey kid!
You there!

Array didn’t pay attention to the shouting at first but when he noticed who was talking, he suddenly got infuriated.

Surely you remember our glorious battles?

Woah... is everything okay, Array?

No... it’s that MONSTER who made my life a living hell!

Yes, yes!
He does remember!
* points at him *
Come up here, you freak!
Let’s give everyone a fight they will never forget!

But before Array could attack him, Bushra took a step forward and responded instead.

Oh yeah, I remember you!
Didn’t you lose to a group of mere kids?

What-

Survey was caught off guard by Bushra’s nonchalant response. He crossed his arms and pointed at him instead.

N-no!
You were just lucky that time.

Array looked at Bushra with a confused expression.

Bushra?

What are you doing?

Just leave it up to me, buddy.
I know what I’m doing.

Array sighed. He knew Bushra was right. Survey was just trying to toy with him, just like all the other times.

Alright then.
Carry on.

Thank you.

Bushra walked a few steps to the front with a grin on his face.

Oh so?
Do you want to be remembered by a guy who lost to children?

S-shut up!
You are supposed to be intimidated by me!
Not... not this!

Sure, sure...

I’m literally conquering this kingdom for my own, you hear?!
Minion...
* points at Bushra *
ATTACK!

But no one came. Survey looked around in confusion and saw a hoodster trying to get up from the ground.

Oh... right.
I did throw that guy to the ground...

Suddenly, the pipe behind Survey exploded as the water from inside grabbed ahold of him.

Gah, what in tarnation is this?!

Survey looked around in panic and saw Bushra singing a tune to himself and controlling the water with his fingers. Everyone watched Bushra's powers in awe. He threw Survey from wall to wall until he thought he had his lesson. Survey was unconscious after the fact.

And... that's how you do it!

(Geez.)
(I wouldn't want to mess with THAT guy...)

* raises her eyebrows *
You know we could have just taken him out too, right?

Yeah, I was already sneaking behind him!
* jumps off the rubble *
You put a lot of folks at risk with that stunt!

Meh, I wanted it to be more fun!

(Showoff...)

* looks at Array *
Hope that was satisfactory, buddy.

Not even half of it but...
* takes a breath *
I appreciate it, Bushra.
Thank you.

No problem, buddy.

Uh... guys?
Where’s G and Sarpo?

Shoot!
I forgot they went ahead!
* points at the dusty clouds *
Let’s go, people!
They might need our help!

Artender ran ahead as everyone else followed sooth.

What was that all about?

Beats me.
Seems like Bushra took care of it though.

Yeah...
* looks back at Kyle *
As I was saying, you are “Xtress”, in a way.

* points at their monster arm *
My guess is, Maizie changed who was in control over Xtress' body.

What does that mean?

Xtress consumed hoodsters' life essences to reform his body.
We all know this.
His body was held together by dead hoodsters with him on the driver's seat.
* looks at Kyle *
It seems like Maizie swapped you and Xtress' places.

But... I don't look like Xtress.
(At least, I hope I don't.)

Yeah, that's the iffy part of my theory.
* points at the monster arm *
But it's the only way to explain your... strange arm.

Kyle was losing their mind. So much information was dumped onto them at once, they were so confused and scared.

This is too much to handle... I don't know what to do!

Woah, woah, relax!
We will help you.

Help who?

The three of them turned back and saw Artender alongside all their friends looking at them with confused expressions. Explaining this is

going to be a doozy, G thought to himself.

Sarpo?
W-What is happening?
* squints his eyes *
Is that...

...hi.

Kyle waves “hello” with their monster arm which freaks Artender out.

ACK!
Why is your arm like that?!
* looks at Sarpo again *
Sarpo, do you mind explaining?!

I’m trying to find out what’s going on as well, Artender.
Believe me.
I am.

Sarpo?!
Is everything okay?

We are fine, Cloe.
Just trying to figure out what’s going on.

I see.
I know you got this.
* kisses him on the cheek *

Be careful still.

I will, don’t worry.

Sarpo looked back to see Kyle but they weren’t there anymore. Sarpo quickly looked at his surroundings and saw both G and Kyle looking at the crystal statue of Maizie. G looked at Kyle afterwards and saw them trying to hold in their tears. As much as he hated Maizie for what she did, a part of him felt really bad for Kyle as well.

I-I’m truly sorry, Kyle.

...

Getting separated from someone close to you is hard...
* looks at Bushra from a distance *
I would know.

It’s... fine.
* sighs *
I just... I didn’t think she would go this far.

Kyle leaned over and grabbed the statue’s hand, to feel Maizie’s love again.

You know, it’s funny.
Maizie was always determined to get what she wanted.
She has always been that way.
But doing all of this... and then... losing her life...

Kyle couldn’t help themselves but burst in tears. G tried helping them get up but Kyle refused to do so.

Oh Maizie... my beautiful sunshine...
* looks at their hands *
Why did you do all of this... for me.

G saw Sarpo slowly walking towards the two. The two didn’t exchange a single word but nodded to each other anyways. They knew what they had to do. G backed away a few steps as Sarpo went to comfort Kyle instead.

Hey.

...

Kyle.

Kyle reluctantly looks at Sarpo with tears in their eyes.

What do you want?
* stands up *
You people already got you wanted... just let me mourn in peace!

Kyle... we didn’t want it to come to this either.

Kyle gritted their teeth, they almost looked like they were about to unleash their anger on Sarpo. Bushra leaned on to protect Sarpo but G stopped him in his tracks. This wasn’t their business. But instead, Kyle took a deep breath and sat down again with their knees on the ground.

As much as I want to believe you are lying... I know you aren’t.

* looks at the statue *
My dear Maizie never took “no” for an answer... at least when she wasn’t forced to abide by her superiors.
She was such a strong woman.
Oh... Maizie...
* sniffs *
So... that’s it then, huh?
The love of my life is gone and in exchange for their life, I got brought back-
* looks at their monster arm *
-like this.

Kyle looked at Sarpo with sadness but also a strange type of emotion.

Acceptance.

I suppose you are here to finish me off, right?
Maizie is gone and for the safety of the planet, her lover needs to die as well...

Not at all.
How did you come to that conclusion?

Kyle raised their eyebrow.

You sure?
That doesn’t sound like MPC2 work.

What do you mean?

Oh, come on!
I heard the stories!
You people lock up all ex-hoodsters and then kill them off when you have had your fun!

I don’t know who told you those stories but those are not true in the slightest.
* sits next to Kyle *
Here in MPC2, we are all like a family.
We all take care of each other.

...

I know you probably don’t trust me.
But just to convince you that I’m not-

Sarpo turns his back and calls the blonde boy with the hat next to him. Kyle’s eyes widened the moment they saw the kid in front of them. They instantly recognized who he was.

Array?!
I thought you were a goner!

H-heya, Kyle.
Long time no see, eh?

Kyle was not only shocked to see Array here but more that he was friends with an MPC2 member.

But... she said you didn’t show them any mercy!

Maybe the MPC of old did but now...
* looks at Array with a smile *
We are willing to give second chances.

Sarpo raises his cybernetic arm and Kyle braced themselves for an attack. But instead, they noticed Sarpo reaching out for a handshake.

What...

I mean it.
Join our side and we will keep you safe.
I promise.

Kyle was hesitant to go along with this. After all, this organization was the reason their girlfriend was now dead. But if they refused... then what? They would have to live by themselves for the rest of their life... especially with this monster hand stuck to them. So, knowing that they had no other choice, they took a deep breath and accepted Sarpo's offer.

Thank you so much for the opportunity, Mr...?

Fields.
Sarpo Fields.

And so, Kyle was now a part of their group. The whole group knew they couldn't repay what happened to Maizie but they would try their hardest to make Kyle feel at home.

You ready to rebuild our planet, Kyle?

I guess so...
It would certainly put my mind in ease knowing I helped undo our mistakes...

Sarpo helped Kyle got up as everyone started to celebrate once again.

Not only was the day just saved, but they also gained a new ally as well! They all prepared to leave the remains of the castle to announce their plans to the people outside. Sarpo ordered Midori to help Kyle walk while he went from ahead.

Here, take my hand.

Thanks, bow girl.

Midori helped Kyle walk with the best of her ability.

I overheard what happened...
I’m sorry for your loss.

...thanks.

Midori looked at Kyle with a tired expression. She went through this song and dance before them... and it hasn’t exactly been easy to forget about it.

Believe me, I understand the feeling...

Hmpf, really now?

...yes.
I lost my mother too.

Oh.

Kyle didn’t expect this to come out of the girl who they just met but... a part of them was happy that she shared this with them.

I... see.
Sorry for your loss as well.

Kyle looked back as they walked farther and farther away from the statue Maizie had turned into. They saw Array walking towards the two while holding something in his hands. They couldn’t tell what it was from far away.

Kyle, here.
Take this.

Array throws Maizie’s crown towards Kyle, much to their surprise.

W-what?
* looks at the crown *
Why give me this?

Well, I figured you would want something to remember her by.
You know?

...

Array walked closer to Kyle and whispered at them.

No matter what her intentions were, Maizie would want you to be

happy, don’t forget that.

* sighs *
I know.
* looks at the sky *
And that’s the part that hurts the most.

Meanwhile, the group was split into smaller groups, each one having conversations different than the other!

Man, that was tough!
I didn’t think we were going to make it!

Tell me about it.
I was SWEATING while I was fighting alongside G and Teo.

I can only imagine the stress.

Artender looked over to Sarpo as he was carrying Survey and the mysterious hoodsters’ unconscious bodies with both of his shoulders.

Dude, how can you lift those two up at the same time?

Oh, them?
Oh, this is nothing.
Getting used to these cybernetics makes you stronger in general.

Ooh, I see.
That’s fascinating.

Sure is.

Say, what do you plan on doing with these two?

Meh.
We will lock them up as usual.
* points at Survey *
The blue one especially spells trouble.

Agreed on that.

Artender notices his kids playing around on the way downstairs and stops Emily on her tracks before she could fall off one of the holes.

Hey, be careful Emily!

Sorry...

It’s fine, sweetie.
Just be more careful.

Yeah, okay!
I was just talking with Robert and brother Teo!
He was so cool out there!

* raises his hands happiness *

* smiles *
He sure was.
* picks PotaTeo up *
And I’m so proud of him for that.

My awesome boyfriend fought bravely against that mean queen too!
* holds Sarpo’s robotic hand *
Didn’t you, Sarpo?

I-I-
* blushes *
B-boyfriend?!
I didn’t know I was-

BOOO!
Get a room you two!

Everyone in small group laughed to one and another.

Yeah, just kidding.
* smiles *
I’m happy you found your special one, Ms. Meow.

Cloe picked up her tophat and bowed as a response.

I appreciate the kind words, Ms. Hawk.

Thank you, thank you.
I must say though, you certainly changed a lot since we were little.
You used to be such a shy gal when we were spending time in our

clan.
* chuckles *
I always thought I would have been the one to get a boyfriend first!

Well...
* smiles *
Funny how that works, huh?

Yeah... sure is.

Suddenly, Henna grabbed Cloe by the arm and split up from the group, much to Cloe's surprise.

Woah, woah, what's all this about?

You gotta tell me your secrets RIGHT NOW!

W-what-

What do boys usually like?!
* opens her wings *
Come on Cloe, you gotta give me the rundown!

The two chuckled as they continued walking.

Any signs of Joyce around?

* sighs *
Nope.
It seems that she left again... without telling us goodbye.

Not too surprising, unfortunately...

* puts his hand on Don’s shoulder *
It will be fine, bro.

Yeah, I guess so...

Don hugged Hattie to make him feel better about the situation. The two both didn’t know what to feel about Joyce. Did she really hate them? But even if she did... she was their little sister. They couldn’t just ignore her.

We will reunite with her again... someday.

Yeah...
* sighs *
I hope it’s sooner rather than later though.

Man, it has been a while, hasn’t it?

Yep... it almost feels unreal.

Yeah...

G felt Bushra holding his shoulder.

Can’t believe I’m saying this but... I really did miss you, buddy.

* smiles *
I did too, Bushra.

The two smiled at each other. After this long journey, the two best friends were back together again once more.

But hey, let’s stop with the heartfelt wishy-washy talk, shall we?

Wha- why?

It’s not really my thing, you know?
* chuckles *
Plus, you and Array and are WAY better at that than me!

Oh, you jerk!

G lightly pushes Bushra as they share a laugh together.

So, we both got our powers back, eh?

Sure seems like it!
* summons his hammer *
All the same... it’s good to be back.

Same here, especially because I’m no longer a mind-controlled freak.

Bushra remembers something and looks at G.

Hey, G.

Yeah, Bushra?

Say, how did you get hammer powers before we took down Maizie?

Oh, that?
Well... I went to one of those temples with the wishing rivers and then got my powers back!

Daww... really?!
(sarcasm) I could have used that wish for myself instead!

The two have another laugh and continue walking. But Bushra still had one question in his head.

Ooh, ooh, one more question!

Yeah?

If you got secondary powers from that river... shouldn’t you have two hammer powers now instead?

...huh.

G summons his hammer again and looks at it. He was confused now.

You know, I never thought about that.
That’s odd.
I wonder what happened to that other power...

The two looked at each other with worry in their eyes but then shrugged it off. Now wasn’t the time to think about that. After a few minutes of walking downstairs (with Hattie almost falling in one of the holes), they could see the exit door. They all sighed in relief as they continued down the clear path. They heard the crowd cheering on for them. Sarpo smiled, at least the people were happy, even after the apocalypse had just ended. With a few adjustments to their current system, they could go back to how things used to be real soon! He looked over his friends and family to see how they were. Kyle still seemed tired so he went to cheer them up.

Heya Kyle!

Hey.

We are almost at the exit!
How do you feel?

Uhm... I am still not sure myself.

I... see.
It’s fine, though.
That’s a completely valid reaction.

Yeah...

Say, you said someone told you those false stories about MPC, right?

Yeah?
What of it?

I was wondering... who told you those stories in the first place?

Uhm... Hood herself?

Suddenly, Sarpo's eyes widened. All MPC2 members looked each other in panic, much to Kyle's confusion. They entirely forgot about her... where even was she?

H-Hood?!

Yes?

Sarpo leaves the conversation in a hurry and ran towards the door with the help of his boosters. Kyle didn't understand what the big deal was and decided to follow Sarpo from behind. When the two got outside, they realized what was truly going on.

The cheering wasn't for them.

W-What's going on?!

Sarpo noticed the people cheering on an unknown figure. Kyle could

spot them from the crowd but couldn't tell who exactly that was.

* squints their eyes *
Is that-

As a flash of light covered their faces, they would both get their answers.

Well, well, look who it is!

Sarpo looked around and saw Hood standing on top of a wooden stage.

We were all wondering when you were gonna show up!

HOOD!

Sarpo transformed his cybernetic hand to a laser blaster and pointed at Hood. He turned his back and saw his friends and family have caught up to them.

Your menace ends now!
Guys, take her down!
* points at her *
You are going back to that prison cell!

Hood seemed surprisingly chill about his threats. She smiled and closed her eyes. Almost like she was waiting for something to happen. Sarpo wasn't going to take that risk however. Before his friends and family could jump into the action, a majority of the people in the crowd pushed them away from Hood instead. Sarpo was shocked beyond belief.

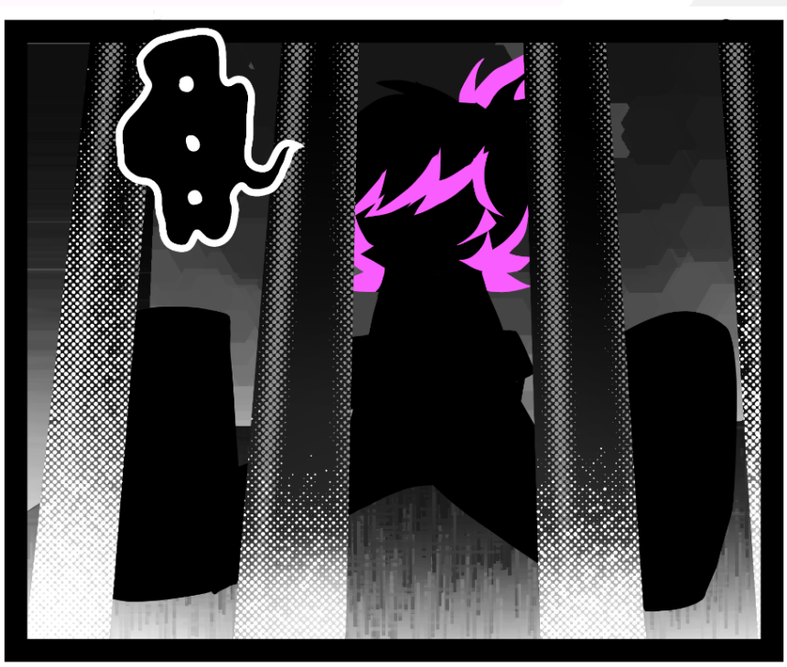
W-What are you doing?!
What’s the meaning of this?!

Hood gives them the order to stop as they went a few steps back. Sarpo didn’t understand what was going on. The people didn’t have crystals stuck to their heads anymore, so mind control was out of the question. Xtress’ old hoodster technique shouldn’t be able to work as well, Sarpo thought. But then... why were the people trusting Hood all of a sudden?

I assume you were wondering why the people you have been fighting to save for all these months, suddenly turned on you?

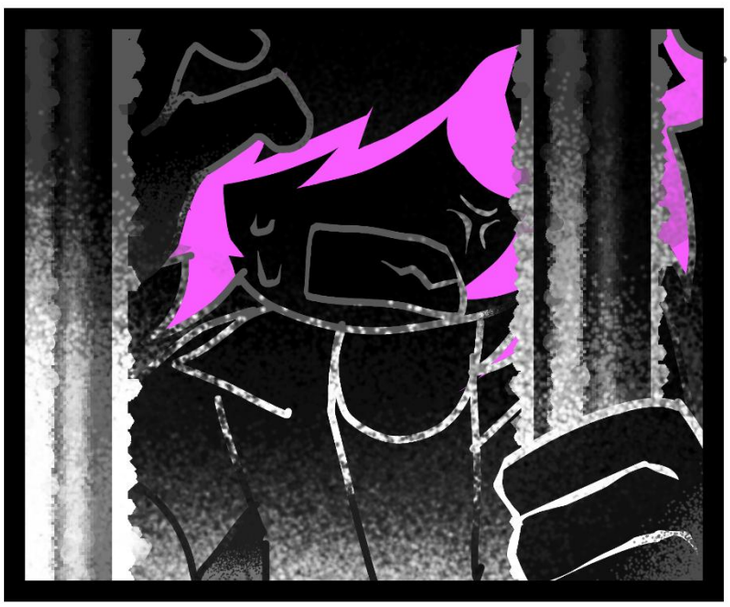
...

Well, fear not!
I will explain it right away!
* jumps off the stage *
While you JOKERS were wasting your time inside, I told these people the truth!
* claps her hands *
And I believe it’s time for a recap!



Hood did a dramatic pose and started explaining her whole ordeal.

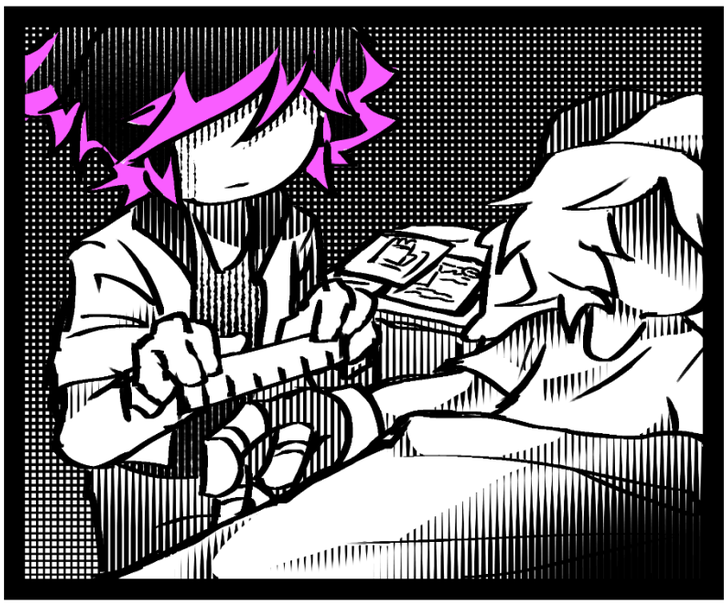
“Ever since you put me in prison, I knew Maizie was alive from the very beginning. She had to be. She’s a resilient hoodster, after all. She had been that way even before I burned down her village! So, I patiently waited for her to come and rescue from me from my prison cell but instead... she followed her own dumb scheme. So, I had to adjust my plans.”



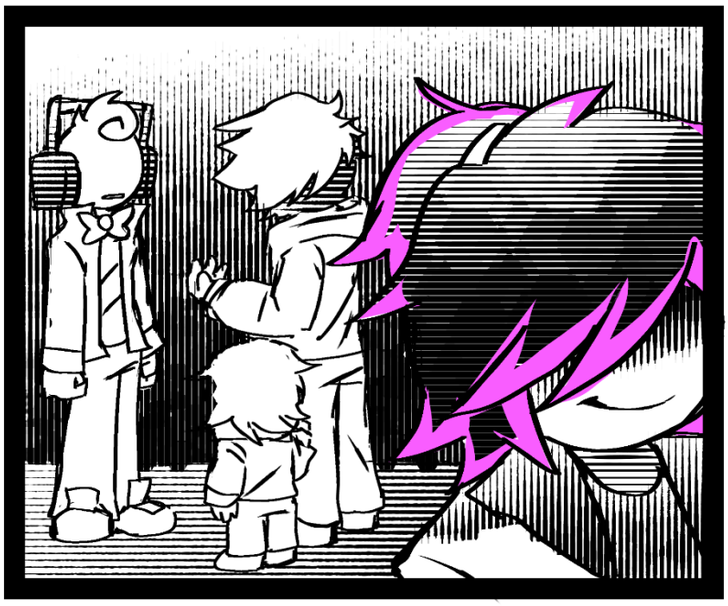
“I knew you people would come back to rescue me. After all, I helped you get into the Nor Plane all those months ago. And I took advantage of that.”

“While you were trying to stop Maizie, I was planning on my next big move. At first, I tried inventing a new version of the hoodster

conversion process. It was going to be a process where you would bind their souls to Xtress without asking for the other person's consent. But as time went on, the project went nowhere. So, I had to get... creative."



"I didn't have to worry about my safety during Maizie's mayhem. After all, you and your pitiful friends trusted me and wouldn't let me get crystallized. "



YOU MONSTER!
We treated you during your time of need!
And THIS is how you repay us?!

It’s a fatal flaw to put trust on the enemy, Artender.
You of all people should know that by now.
* smiles *
But of course, I shouldn’t be too surprised of a father figure.
You went SOFT!

...

“As for Maizie, I just let her do her own thing. The idiot didn’t even bother reading the fine prints. She had no idea that there was a reason I built a separate machine to crystallize people, rather than mastering crystal magic on my own. The second I heard that she used crystal magic with her staff, I knew her time was limited in this world. Crystallization takes more away from the person who uses it than the ones who get effected by it. The more Maizie used her crystal powers, the more her heart got crystallized too! She did all of this to herself, without thinking of its consequences.”

Hood stopped talking as she noticed something in the crowd.

Bap bap!
* points at Henna *
I can see you readying a dagger towards my face!

I- How did you-

* chuckles *
Surely you wouldn’t to anger the crowd, hm?

GRR...

* puts Henna’s wing down *
Henna... not now.

...fine.

All and all, the fool ended her journey the same way she started it.
Pathetic and sad.
While I came out victorious!

Fat chance!
Even if we were to somehow believe your story, that doesn’t mean we should just obey your rules!

Oooh, really?
* smiles *
Ask that to these innocent people that you all recklessly took for granted!

Suddenly, there was a lot of grunting/in-talking from the crowd.
Sarpo and his friends were scared more than ever.

You are made of nothing but lies!

I wouldn't be so sure of that!
Not when taking your portfolio into account!
* puts her hand on her chin *
Hm... let's see here.

"Let's talk about how you DIDN'T warn the people of Diamond City or heck, no other place on Perdiah about the crystal pillars! Surely, you could have just given everyone a heads up!"

I-

ENOUGH!

Everyone looked at Cloe with her arms up in the air. Sarpo had a terrified look on his face.

Are you people forgetting who you are listening to?!
That's Hood Riley!
She destroyed countless places and sacrificed a bunch of people for

her cause!
You can’t seriously be trusting her!

Cloe is right!
Even as a little gal, I heard stories about Hood’s evil plans!
She’s evil, I tell you!

And then, there was silence. But only for a brief moment. Hood smiled and looked at Cloe in the eyes.

Oh, how rich... coming from YOU of all people, kitty cat.
Say... who was it that ran away from her problems when their dear needed her help the most?

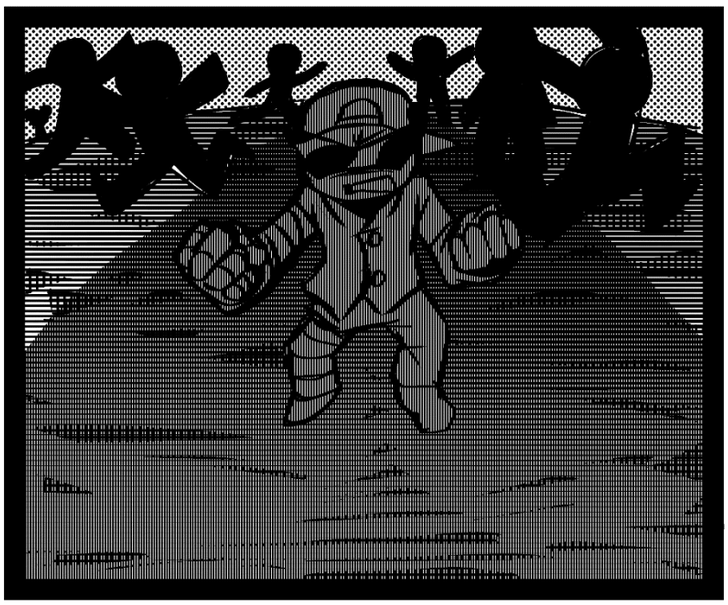
Cloe’s expression suddenly changed to a horrified look.

W-What?!
How do you know that?!

Oh, believe me, I have done my fair share of digging around.
* gigles *
Now if you will excuse me... let me continue.

Cloe was silent, she didn’t even know what to respond with.

“Second, you let Xtress grow more and more powerful, eventually leading to his escape! The people of Diamond City had to stay inside their homes, terrified of the blob monsters that could kill them if they made any bad move!”



Hey, you were a part of that too!

* clenches his fist *

Oh sure, I was also a part of it.
I won’t lie to these people, unlike you peasants.
* smiles *
But I am not the top of the worldwide protection organization now, am I?

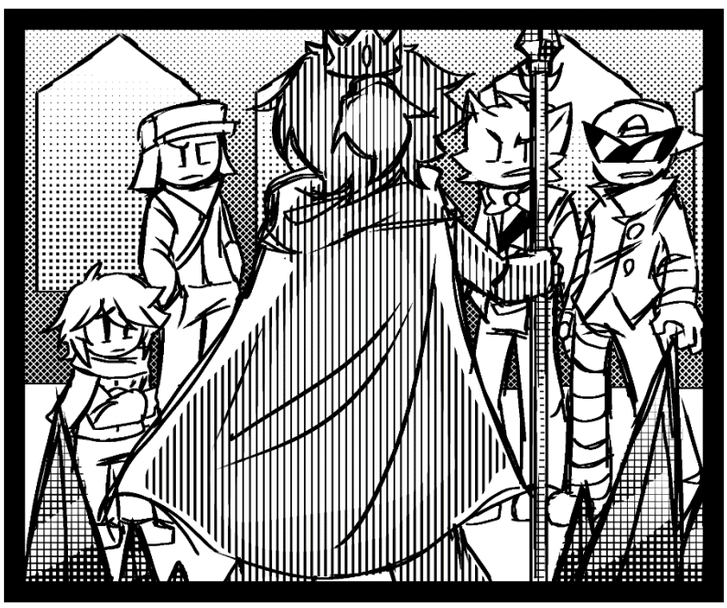
...

You know, it’s kind of funny how MPC was a far more respectable organization under that coward Carlos’ watch.

You take that back!

As the heads of MPC2, you two have way more responsibility for these people than I ever did!

“Speaking of which... that ties nicely to our last topic at hand... Maizie. You let her get away from that base and essentially let her take over the whole planet overnight! A REAL leader would stop her before she grew stronger!”



What do you have to say about THAT, Mr. Fields?

Sarpo was dead silent. He didn’t really know what to say. If he said anything, he knew he would anger these people even more.

That’s what I thought-

Wait!

Eh?

Sarpo might have made a lot of mistakes... but he has stuck to his mission of protecting everyone since the start!
(...even I wasn't as dedicated to that mission unlike him.)

Yeah!
He saved me and my best friend Bushra during the toughtest time of our lives!

He sure did!
He's an awesome guy.

* carrying both of his kids on his shoulder *
He gave me a purpose in life.

He saved me from one of those evil monsters and kicked their butts!
Mr. Fields is a good person!

* gives a thumbs up *
The group expected a bunch of people in the crowd to support them but instead, it was unusually quiet. Sarpo had a weird feeling in his stomach.

Hm... a valiant attempt from you people.
But unfortunately, a few good deeds does not magically solve everything!

Hood jumps on the stand again and points around herself.

Who's going to repair these places after this whole thing clears, huh?!

* points at Sarpo and co *
Not you, of course! The people will!

Suddenly, a bunch of people started cheering on for Hood instead of the “heroes”.

“Hood will save us!”
“MPC2 never did anything for us!”
“We will be safer under Hood’s control!”
“Our voices will be heard!”

Sarpo was almost going to faint just from hearing all the reactions. This had to be a sick nightmare!

Take it easy everyone!
* chuckles *
Take it easy!
As I was trying to say, I just showed everyone the truth.

Yes, she did!

Everyone looked at Survey with confusion in their eyes. Just who was this guy? And most importantly, how did he get away?

Didn’t you tie him up?

* shrugs with a worried expression *
...oops?

Who are you supposed to be?

I am Mike Survey!
One of your most loyal followers!

Huh, fascinating.

I have been looking all over for you!

Really now?

Hood was surprisingly flattered for once.

* grins *
Tell me more.

I have been searching for your whereabouts with my group of hoodsters for months.

Hm... where is your “supposed” group of hoodsters then?

Uh...

Survey looks around in worry. He sees the hooded figure trying to get away and gets a hold of him.

EEK!

We have severely decreased in numbers but rest assured, we are just as loyal to you as ever!
With my good friend...
* looks at the hooded figure *

What was your name again?

It’s Daniel, sir-

-Dan here!
We would really appreciate it if we joined your cause!

Hm... very well.
I was looking for subordinates anyways so... Survey, you are in!

YES!

Survey and Dan walked behind Hood and waited for her to continue her speech.

But as I was saying...
The choice is on the people to decide who they trust more.

Suddenly, the crowd went wild. Both sides were hearing Hood out on this.

You can either pick MPC2 with their ignorant nature...
OR you can pick lil’ old me!
People will live under my watch but without their ignorance.
I cannot guarantee the best lifestyle but I assure you, serving me will be much better in the long run than just being some casualty!

Hood jumped out of the stand and landed in the middle of the crowd. She slammed the ground with her foot to cause more impact.

Those who choose to follow me... stand on my back!

Everyone went silent. It was time to choose.

It was a stressful moment for everyone involved. MPC2 and their friends were worried about defending themselves if their group was outnumbered compared to Hood's group. But Sarpo wasn't just worried about that aspect. Hood was kind of right about him. He was scared that the people he tried protecting would turn against him. Cloe noticed him feeling down and tried to make him feel better while the voting was still going on.

After a few minutes, the results were in. 70% of the people outside had chosen Hood's side while the rest were staying behind Sarpo and his friends. Hood chuckled, she had won.

Oh, how delightful!
Turn out majority of the people picked the right choice!

Sarpo and the others prepared their weapons for a fight of their lives. Even if they were tired after the whole battle with Maizie, they weren't going to let Hood take away their freedom.

Oh, what's with all the weapons?
Did you all seriously think I was going to fight you?
Right now?

The group didn't respond. They were equally as confused as each other.

Well... tell you what.
* snaps her fingers *
As a consolation prize, you can have Diamond City and this place all for yourselves!

Sarpo was confused as ever. What was she planning to do?

What are you trying to accomplish?

Oh, you don’t trust me!
* chuckles *
Don’t worry, I wouldn’t either.
* crosses her arms *
I know ending you morons here for good would be the better option but... it’s just not FUN otherwise!

Hood snaps her fingers and orders her group to ready themselves. They were about to leave this destroyed kingdom.

Don’t get too comfy though!
We will be back to conquer your side of the planet when I’m bored!

...so you are still going to conquer places, huh?

Sure will!
What did you think?

I wouldn’t expect anything worse from YOU!

Oh, you charmer!
* giggles *
You got that right!

How are you going to do that?
People will eventually rise up against you once they realize how terrible of a person you are!
* points at her *
And you can’t control them either!
Crystallization seems to be gone for good and Xtress no longer exists!

Oh, pumpkin!

Hood shows him a slight glimpse of a blueprint. It looked like the gauntlet Array was wearing.

You don’t have the slightest idea!

Hood waves the group goodbye as she left the kingdom with a big smile on her face.

Toodles, everyone!
Good luck with the repairs!

As Hood turned her back, Team Bushra and Array decided to follow them. But their friends stopped them.

Guys, what are you doing?!

Yeah, let us get ‘em!

She will pay for her evil actions!

Sarpo put his finger in front of his mouth and told them to shut it. These kids, Sarpo thought. They didn’t know the extent of their problem.

Yeah, why did you stop us, Sarpo?

If we fight them now, we will get destroyed by their sheer numbers.

I can’t let my friends, family and everyone who has stuck with our cause to get hurt more.
* sighs *
And despite their choices... I can not let you guys hurt those people either.
They chose Hood because they grew tired of our “failures” and simply thought they had no other option.
And we will fix those mistakes first to get those people back on our side.

Team Bushra and Array backed away. But Sarpo could tell they still wanted to fight against Hood and her forces.

But it’s not fair... she can’t keep getting away with stuff like this!

Unfortunately, that’s her biggest strength.
It really doesn’t matter if some of us have magic powers or not.
Because Hood has the deadliest power of all...
Manipulation.

As soon as he said the last word, the three stopped arguing with Sarpo. He was right, of course. Everyone was silent for a brief moment. They were all evaluating everything they had experienced. By giving Hood so much authority, they gave back power to their deadliest enemy. It was sickening to even think about.

So... what now?

Hm?

Yeah.
* holds Sarpo’s hand *
What are we going to do now?

Sarpo looked back to see all the people that had stayed behind but most importantly, to see the people he held most dear to his heart. The duo he saved when they were defenseless, the love of his life, the person who was now a proud father, the girl he saved from being alone her entire life, a powerful little kid, a brave and determined kid... To see the friends he made along the way. The goofy scientist brothers, a petty but still great associate, friend of a loved one and of course, a new player in their group... they were all there. Staying by his side until the very end.

Well... I don’t know what’s going to happen next.
But I assure you all, no matter what happens...

Sarpo looked behind him and saw the sun as it was rising. Everyone looked at it in awe, it was such a great sight. Sarpo smiled and continued.

“We will face it... together.”

END OF PART 3

BONUS CHAPTERS

Just like last time, there have been a few bonus/extra chapters written for the series that don't really have a proper place in the main timeline.

First off is "**The Beach Episode**", a chapter I wrote for April Fools Day in less than 2 hours. It's semi-canon but it doesn't affect the main timeline in a substantial way.

Second one is "**Halloween Tales**". Just as the name implies, this chapter was released to celebrate Halloween. It's a two parter with a fellow team member (@engulfedlies) writing the 1st part and me writing the 2nd one. It's non-canon but it introduces new characters such as Lorelai and Viktor before their first canonical appearances in Arc4.

And lastly, "**SRP of The Future**". This chapter is a take on a fellow team member's (@Sonic32Super) AU of the series. (So, it's non-canon by default) I was intrigued by the concept so I decided to write a chapter based on it. Hope you enjoy reading all three chapters!

@fangnull

THE BEACH EPISODE!

The trio were heading back to the lockers while holding their towels after a fun day at the beach.

Oh man, that was so much fun!

You said it, boss!
Who knew how much a single day at the beach helps the human body!

Yep!
I feel so relaxed!

It's gonna be weird going back to the usual routine but at least we all had fun, right?

YEAH!!!

Awesome!
* looks at Lydia *
Now, can you give me the keys to the lockers?

Wait, me?
I thought Terry had them!

Uh... no.
I paid for all the umbrellas and sodas.
YOU were suppose to take care of the keys!

Uhm...

Haha, very funny joke Lydia!
Can you give me the keys already?

...

....you weren't kidding?

Gosh dang it.
Now what are we gonna do?!

I think we should sit down first to talk about what we can do.
Other people would tell us to move aside at some point.

Fair enough.
* looks around *
Would that table do, boss?

Yeah, yeah.

The three slowly walk towards the table and sit down on the chairs.

Okay so first off-

Would you want something, ma'am?

No, thanks. I'm full.
You guys?

N- nothing.

A cup of water maybe?

Alright then.
I will be back in a second.

The three watch as the waiter goes to a different room.

So, let's catch up here.
Terry paid for the accessories and food.
I made the reservations for the beach and Lydia was supposed to take care of the keys, right?

If I recall correctly, yeah.

I guess...

So...
* holds her head *
The keys could quite literally be anywhere.

...it appears to be the case, yes.

It could be underwater too...

Hnrgh...

L-Let's stay positive here!

Like how exactly, you twerp-

Settle down, Terry.
Let's hear our little trouble maker out.

I just thought, maybe, we can try different methods to unlock the lockers!
We can break it open with our weapons!

Weapons aren't allowed in beach locals, smartypants.
Even if we were allowed to, pretty sure I put my bow and your axe inside the lockers.

...ah.

Well, in that case...
* points at Clara *
You are one of the mayors, right?
You can just ask them to open it for us!

No can do.
Mayors can't do anything as they please.

That's weird.
That's not how the newspapers describe it-

ANYWAYS!
Any more ideas?

Well, we could just... leave the items and come back later with a humble complaint document.
It's getting a bit late.

Yeah, you are right.

Still though, I can't believe how irresponsible you are, Lydia!
We could have lost all of our items for good if we didn't have our boss with us!

Sorry... I just wish I remembered where I put the keys...
I swear this won't happen again!

The trio ride back to their homes and wave each other goodbye.
Clara started walking towards her house.

(Stupid Lydia... why is she like this... always a nuisance)

Clara knocked on the door and no response came from the other side.

Hmpf... darn it, Lawrence.
* puts her hand on her pockets *
I wish he was here to open the door...

Clara picked up the keys and looked at her hand only to notice...

...oh.

She had the keys to the lockers.

Flash back to a few hours ago; Clara was resting on a sunbed while the other two were swimming in the sea.

* takes a sip from her soda *
Ahh... this is LIFE!

Clara notices Lydia walking towards her.

Hey, boss!

What is it, Lydia?

Can you take care of the keys for a bit?
I want to go scuba diving with Terry!

* chuckles *
Sure.

Thank you, boss!
See you!

Present time;

...

Oh, hello Clara!

EEK!
* throws the keys to the nearby river in panic *
H- hi, Lawrence!

What was that?

What was what?!
* nervously smiles *
I don't know what you are talking about!

Uh... sure?

Yeah!
Let's just rest!
(I will tell Terry to hurry up making the document...)

THE END... LOL

TE:R
ADVENTURES
X
HALLOWEEN TALES
FALIN
TURTLEDOODLE1
SUPERTAILS32

Pt. 1 NIGHTMARE ON ARRAY STREET

Starring...

In another time, in another place...

It was officially fall season on Perdiah. The leaves were colorful and the energy in the air shifted as the weather started to get colder. But with the fall, comes the Halloween festivities. G and Bushra hatched a plan to invite all their friends to a Halloween party so they could enjoy the holiday together. G entered the room and saw Bushra lying down on the couch.

BUSHRA!!
* Shakes him *
BUSHRA!!

* Yawns *
Yeah man, what’s up?

Have you finished writing all the invitation cards yet!?
We need to make sure we have plenty of time to prepare for the party, so you need to wrap that up!

I’m… Almost done?

What does that mean!?

I… MAY have fell asleep after writing the first few…
I’ll get the rest done now though.

Alright, well I gotta go put up all these decorations, by the time I’m done you better have all these finished!!

* Jolts up *
ALRIGHT!!

Bushra continued to fill out the party invitations and G set up the decorations for the party. After a few hours they were finally finished and went to the post office to mail all of the invitations out to their friends.

Phew... That took forever but I’m glad it’s done now.

Yeah, now let’s head back so we can sleep and be ready for the party tomorrow.

Sounds like a good idea.

G and Bushra headed back home and quickly fell asleep after entering. They were exhausted from all of the planning and setting up they did but in the end they knew it was worth it.

* Yawns *
Rise and shine Bushra!!
Today’s the big day!

* Groans *
Give me like 5 more minutes G, I don’t wanna get up yet...

You have to Bushra!!
Artender and the kids are gonna be here early to help set up the food!!

* Sits up *
Oh... Right.
I forgot about that.

Yeah...
So get up and get ready, we have a long day ahead of us man.

Alright alright...

G and Bushra spent the next couple hours fixing the placement of decorations and tidying up the house to make sure everything looked okay for their guests, and at Artender’s house things were going according to plan. Or at least so they thought.

Hey Emily!
Make sure to grab my bag my hands are gonna be full so I won’t be able to carry it!!

Okay!!

* Looks down at Teo *
You'll be able to handle carrying the pies right?

* Nods *

Alright good.

* Gives a thumbs up *

Artender heard a ding come from the kitchen and ran to see what was finished.

Oh! The pies are done!!

Yay!!

Emily could you help me and set the pies on the counter, the cookies are about to be done and I have to pull them out the other oven.

Okay!

While Emily was setting the pies on the counter she looked outside and noticed a red glow coming from the distance, but she shrugged it off and ran to the living room after setting up the pies. Off in the distance a familiar red evil was speaking to himself.

Hmm...

HOW CAN I USE THIS TO MY ADVANTAGE...
I KNOW!
I CAN MAKE THEM LEAVE EARLY AND AFTER THEIR STUPID LITTLE PARTY STARTS, I CAN LURE THEM BACK HERE WHEN THEY FORGET THEY LEFT THEIR PIES HERE.

Xtress looked down and noticed a cat walking besides him. He got the cat's attention and pointed towards Artender's house. After a few minutes the cat walked all the way over to Artender's front lawn.

OOH!! A KITTY!!
* Holds her face *
WE HAVE TO GO AND PET IT, BROTHER TEO!

Emily rushed out the door and Teo quickly followed. Artender looked at the time and realized it was about time for them to leave. He grabbed the cookies and candy and rushed out the door, leaving the pies behind. He felt as if he was forgetting something but a quick large gust of wind shut the door behind him before he could walk back inside. So he decided to lock the door and just head to G's house.

THAT... WAS EASY.
WELL THEN...
NO TIME FOR GAMES...
NOW I KNOW I CAN'T DO THIS ALONE...
I'LL NEED HELP, BUT FROM WHO...

Xtress quickly disappeared far into the forest and went on a search around Perdiah to find someone to accompany him on his mission. Back at G's house though, Artender and the kids were arriving to help out with food preparation.

* Opens the door *
Oh hello!!

Hello!!

* Waves *

Come on in guys!

They all walk in and close the door behind them. G and Bushra lead Artender to the kitchen and let Emily and Teo into the backyard to play.

Alright Artender, I'll let you do whatever you need to do in here.
You can always call for me if you need me!

Alright!
I'll let you know if I need anything.

While Artender was cooking in the kitchen and the rest were playing outside. The first few guests started to arrive a few minutes early.

Hi Sarpo!
Hi Cloe!

Hi G!

Thanks for inviting us!

A few minutes later, the next few guests arrived.

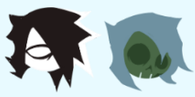
Hey G!!

Hey guys!!
Come right on in!

Two Crystal Knights followed in through the door after them. A few minutes after that a large group of guests arrived.

Hi G!!

Hey, thanks for inviting us!!



Hello, thanks for having us.

Woah theres a lot of you!
Come on in!!

Right after the group walked back into the house and as G was about to close the door. Someone quickly ran up to the house.

* Panting *
IM HERE I MADE IT!!

ARRAY, YOU FINALLY CAME!
I was wondering where you were!

Sorry If I’m late I got caught up in something!

No worries, I’m just glad you made it, you’re right on time actually!
Please, come in!

Now that everyone was here at the party, they could officially begin. There was music blaring and conversations amongst the partygoers. It seemed like everyone was having a great time although there was tension between 2 of the atendees.

* Whispering to G *
Why does HE have to be here!?

* Whispers back *
I didn’t want to leave him out, it would have been rude.

Well I just don’t want him to be here.

I know Array but I can’t just kick him out now!
* Takes a drink *
Try to ignore him and everything will be alright... at least I hope so.

Meanwhile, across the room, Hood and Survey were discussing amongst themselves.

* Whispering to Hood *
Why did HE show up!??

* Loudly *
Quit acting like a baby.
You can just ignore him.

Survey realized Hood was no help and was just further infuriating him, so he walked towards the kitchen to grab some food. But as he went to go in there Artender ran out frantically.

I FORGOT THE PUMPKIN PIES!!

Oh no! We left them at home...

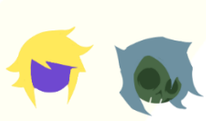
Many of the partygoers came to the party for the pies that Artender made. They are known as one of the best pumpkin pie recipes on all of Perdiah. So it made sense as to why Artender was so frantic when he realized.

(Worried) What am I gonna do!??
I can’t go back and get them I still need to prepare the other desserts..

I can get them!

The two slowly turn to eachother angrily. Realizing what just happened. G and Hood look at eachother and notice what just happened and realized that this was a perfect oppurtunity to allieviate some of the tension between the two.

YOU TWO CAN GO TOGETHER!

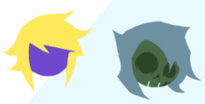


WHAT?!

NO WAY!

Don’t be a crybaby, Survey!

Y-yeah, I thought it could be nice since you both offered at the same time!



(Angrily) There is NO chance I’m going with HIM.

They both groaned heavily realizing they both have the same opinion and thought of eachother. Knowing that at this point they’ll HAVE to go with eachother.

Fine... I’ll go with him.
But we’ll be quick, I don’t WANT to be with him.

Yeah yeah.
* Points at the clock *
Just be back before sundown, that leaves you with about 2 hours, which is plenty of time.

Alright.

* Gives Survey a map *
Here, take this, the circle is where I live.

Alright, thank you.
* Looks at Array *
(Sternly) Lets’s go.

The two headed out the door and they both felt a strange presence in the air but they decided to brush it off without saying anything. But deep down there was an underlying reason as to why they felt that. Outside, in a secret location, Xtress was striking a deal with two of the most brutal bounty hunters on Perdiah.

So uhh... Explain to me again why WE have to do this?
You are Xtress, THE sorcerer of the lands... You can just kill them right?

SILENCE...
IF I COULD TAKE THEM DOWN I'D TRY...
I WAS **GOING** TO TRY TO LURE THEM BUT THEY MADE THE STUPID KID GO, AND IM NOT TAKING MY CHANCES...

So, you want us to try to take down somebody YOU can't?

...

I will take that as a confirmation.

We're gonna need more payment if that's the case.
If we have to take down someone more powerful than you, it won't be easy.

LISTEN...
IT'S NOT THAT I CANT ITS BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO RISK LOSING...

So they're more powerful than you?

That’s kinda pathetic.

ENOUGH!!

(Scared) O-Okay...
* coughs *
Uhm... How much is the payment though?

WE’LL DISCUSS THAT... AFTER THE JOB IS DONE...

* Looks at Lorelai *
This is gonna be easy, let’s go.

Yeah!!
We got this...

Wait! What are we even doing again??

JUST HIDE THE STUPID PIES THEY LEFT OUT AND KILL WHOEVER THEY SEND.

Well then, we’re some of the best bounty hunters on Perdiah, nobody can stop us, we’re very capable of beind able to do this...

Yup!! We got this in the bag, consider it already done!!

VERY WELL THEN...
* points at the dark woods *
WELL GO!!
THIS JOB ISN’T GOING TO DO ITSELF!!

YES SIR!!

Lorelai readied her flag spear and watched as Viktor put on his mask.

We won’t let you down.

Lorelai and Viktor thought that this would be an ordinary job, they usually did jobs that consisted of taking “Care of” easy targets. But they were unprepared for this job. It was... Different.

...

...

* Coughs *

You know-

I know what?

You know this doesn’t have to be awkward dude.

First of all, don’t call me “dude”.
Secondly, I’m not going to pretend to be your friend just because those imbeciles made us go together.
Let’s just get the pies and head back so I can continue ignoring you.

Geez, alright...
Well can we at least strike up SOME conversation, just to ease the mind.

I’d... Rather not.

After the awkard exchange the two had, the weird tension had grown to a point that made Array consider just turning around and going back to the party. But as they continued to walk they heard strange noises.

D-Did you hear that??

Are you seriously scared?
* Laughs *
It’s just an animal in the trees, nothing else.

The sound has been around and it sounds like it’s been following us,
I don’t think it’s “Just an animal in the trees”.

Think what you want, kid.
But I can assure you there’s nothing there.

I somehow doubt that.
I feel like something’s watching us.

You’re just being paranoid, just keep your eyes on the sidewalk.
We’ll be there soon.

Array decided to ignore Survey’s advice and continued to scan everywhere with his eyes. They continued walking and as they approached the path that lead to Artender’s house.

See, I hear the noise again.
Something is definietly following us...

I’ll tell you once again, nothing is following us.

* Looks up and points *
UP THERE!!
IN THE TREES!

Survey looked at where survey was Array was pointing and noticed two glowing eyes. As soon as Survey looked at Array’s direction, the eyes disappeared and they could audibly hear the figure descend far into the forest that surrounded the path to Artender’s house.

A little while later Viktor arrived at Artender’s house where he and Lorelai discussed their plan.

Master, do you think it’s nessecary to stay here?
We could just release our experiments and have them take care of this...

Are you... Scared?

No, I just think this is a waste of time.

Viktor... Xtress himself called upon us for a job...
Do you really think this will just be THAT simple.

I suppose not.
But we could just, leave...
There’s no point in staying, If Xtress wanted somebody gone that he couldn’t take out himself then obviously it’s not worth it for us.

I see your point.
But we are world class bounty hunters.
Our names will finally be in the history books if we can get a job done for Xtress.

Oh yeah...
I don’t think there is anybody more famous than us in this region except maybe the Rascals.
If we can be more infamous than them, then we can finally be known worldwide.
We’ll finally have riches!!

Uhh... Viktor ...My parents were quite literally some of the wealthiest people on all of Perdiah...
I’m set for life.

Oh yeah, I forgot about that...

Anyways... We should each take a pie and hide it somewhere in the house.
I will go outside and patrol the area, you stay in here and let me know if anybody shows up.

Viktor, I’M supposed to be the one making the plans.
But... That does sound good.
Let’s go.

Alright.
Well then, lead the way!

Lorelai and Viktor spent a few minutes hiding the pies in spaces around the house where Survey and Array would never find them. Viktor then headed outside and started setting bear traps around the outside of the house. Back at the trail Array and Survey were discussing amongst themselves.

Is it even worth going at this point?
I don’t feel like this is very safe...

Everyone will be disappointed if we come back without the pies.
Surely you wouldn’t want to ruin the party, hm?

(sarcasm) Ha ha, very funny.

Your sarcastic tone doesn’t affect me.
But as I was saying, we’re almost there anways.
So quit being a baby and let’s go, someone’s just trying to play a prank on us.

Alright...
But if there is something after us, I’m using you as a human shield!

* Chuckles *
Over my dead body.

The pair started to walk down the path to Artender’s house. Occasionally hearing noises in the forest around them but were easily able to distinguish that these noises were just animals. After around 15 minutes they arrived to the property. They were still a way’s away from the house but they could see it. But they noticed, Something was... Off.

Do you think the lights are supposed to be on?

I don’t know.
Also the, doors are open?

Yeah, this is odd.

I don’t have a good feeling about this.

Well the sun is almost down, and we only got a few minutes left.
* points at the door *
Get in, get the pies, and head out.
I’ll stay out here, just in case.

Why stay outside?

Are you scared to go in?

Pfft... NO!
* Sits down *
I just have no desire to walk any further, my legs quite hurt.

Alright then.
I'll head in and be so quick you wont even notice I'm gone!

Actually, I changed my mind, take all the time you need...
PLEASE be gone for as long as you want.

The smirk Array had on his face quickly vanished. He was slightly upset and decided to waste no time and head inside to get away from Survey.

He walked into the house and started looking around for the pies. He didn't see anything but he seemed very paranoid and scared. He was still confused as to why the lights were on.

Hello!?
Is anyone here!??

Suddenly, a figure in the dark jumped up and reached out her hand.

Hey darling!!

WHA-
WHO ARE YOU!?

Takes her hand back
...Rude.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

Jeez calm down...
I’m just here to kill you and your little friend here.

WHAT, WHY!?

If you don’t stop yelling I won’t tell you.

O-Okay...

My little friend Viktor and I-

Wait, who’s Viktor??

AHEM!
As I was saying...

No... Who’s Viktor!?

* Sighs *
(Why are kids always so difficult...)
* coughs *
Viktor and I were hired by Xtress to kill you for some reason. Don’t entirely know why...
To ruin your party...? I guess?

WHAT!??

Yeah... Tough luck kid.
It sucks even more cause you look young.
What’s a kid like you got beef with Xtress for anyways??

* Chuckles *
Now that you mention that, funny story actu-

Yeah... I don’t really care
*Pulls out her flag spear *
I gotta kill you now, sorry...

Good luck with that!
* Enters a fighting stance *
You asked for it!

The two quickly started fighting and are unable to land any hits on the other. They zoom around trying to find the others weak spot. They keep dodging or missing eachother and realize this will not be an easy fight to win for either of them.

Back at the party:

They've been gone for a long time now, do you think they're okay??

* Takes a drink *
They should be fine.
As long as they haven't killed eachother yet...

Yeah, don't worry about them, they should be back shortly, I hope...

Yeah, I think I'm just worrying too much.

Meanwhile:

* Trying to stab Array *
JUST DIE ALREADY!!

Array dodged Lorelai's attack at the last second and punched back at her.

NO WAY, I'M NOT LETTING YOU WIN!

ADMIT DEFEAT AND I'LL MAKE YOUR DEATH A QUICK ONE WITHOUT SUFFERING!!

YOU'RE CRAZY IF YOU THINK IM GONNA GIVE UP THAT EASILY!!

The two continued to back and forth with eachother. Still unable to land a hit on the other. They continued to try to bring the other one

down, they were both starting to get exhausted but didn't want to admit it as it would make them look weaker to the other.

* Dodges an attack *
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS ANYWAYS!?
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO YOU

BOSSES ORDERS!!
SORRY KID!

I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG THOUGH!

DOESN'T MATTER TO ME, I JUST WANNA GET PAID!
* blocks a gauntlet attack *
THIS IS THE BEST JOB I'VE EVER HAD, SO YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO DIE!!

* Lands a punch on Lorelai *
TAKE THAT!

THATS IT!!

Lorelai repeatedly jabbed her spear at Array in an attempt to hit him. She got hurt pretty badly when Array landed the punch on her so she was furious. She was fully committed to taking down Array now.

YOU BRAT!!
YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR THIS YOU LITTLE SNOT RAG!

* Laughs *
YOU’RE JUST MAD YOU CANT KEEP UP WITH ME!!
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME!

UGH, WHY ARE YOU SO DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.
IT’S ALWAYS THE ANNOYING KIDS.

IM NOT **THAT** YOUNG!

WHATEVER...
JUST DIE!

Lorelai decided to try to get the upper hand on Array by attempting to knock him down. She swept Array by his legs and while he fell she jabbed her spear into his hand, as he fell he saw the spear through his hand and fainted.

Meanwile, Survey was waiting on Array, unknowing of what was going on inside.

Ugh... What’s taking him so long.
Surely just grabbing some pies can’t be THAT difficult!

Survey suddenly felt someone leaning on his shoulder with their arm.

Yeah, I totally agree.
It’s just some pies, no need to take an eternity!

Survey quickly jumps up and screams. He sees the figure of Viktor and he can tell something went wrong with Array inside just based

off of his appearance.

WHO ARE YOU??

It’s better off if you don’t know.

Viktor puts on his mask again and looked at Survey with an evil girn. Survey quickly started running, trying to evade Viktor. Viktor walked slowly, taking his time to perfectly move the same distance with each step that he took. Survey obviously outpaced Viktor but Survey didn’t know why he was going so slow. He ran to the side of Artender’s house so he could hide behind the wall.

Oh goodness gracious...
* Peers his head around the corner *
What’s happening!?

When Survey peered his head around the corner, he saw Viktor slowly walking still. He had energy again now after resting behind the wall so he walked out from behind the wall and started running from Viktor. Viktor locked eyes with Survey from around 50 feet away. He raised his arm and threw his axe at Survey. It missed him slightly but the crystals on his axe slightly shattered and started spreading around the yard. Survey looked back up at Viktor as he started running at Survey at an insanely fast speed.

WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NOW HUH!?
WHAT CAN YOU EVEN DO WITHOUT YOUR AXE?!

Survey tried pulling out the axe but for some reason, he didn’t have the strength to do so.

* Smiles *
What were you saying about my axe again?

Yeah, maybe I might have spoken too soon.

Viktor was slowly but patiently walking towards Survey again. He had to come up with some sort of distraction FAST!

Uh...
* Points at the tree *
Look, a shooting star!

Wait, really?

Survey takes his chance and starts running. He wasn't going to look back to see how close Viktor was, so he just kept running.

Back in the house, Lorelai was starting to panic.

Oh dear...
What did I do!?

But then, a confused expression covers her face.

Wait, this is my job...
But then... why am I upset??

Lorelai looked at Array's unconcscious body.

But, he's just a kid, I can't just kill him, I have to help him now.
Ugh.

Lorelai quickly got up and searched around Artender's house for any medical supplies that he may have. She found a first aid kit hidden away in a closet and spent the next few minutes removing the spear from his hand and patching him up. After she was finished

she set him up on the kitchen counter by the window and grabbed a bowl of candy Artender had in the living room and placed it next to him. After a few more minutes he finally woke up.

W-Wha...
* looks around in panic *
W-Where am I?

Relax, I won't hurt you.
* looks around also *
You are at... Whoever's house this is.

* Jolts Awake *
HEY, WAIT YOU STABBED MY HAND!

Calm down kid. I changed my mind I'm not gonna kill you.
* Moves the candy bowl towards him *
Here just have some candy and we can talk this out.

(Angrily) F-Fine.

Array didn't know what was going on but he was just happy to be alive at that moment.

So, who are you anyways??

Oh right! I never told you my name...
My name is Lorelai! Lorelai MacMillan!!

MACMILLAN??
LIKE HEIR OF THE MACMILLAN ESTATE??
DAUGHTER OF TWO OF THE MOST FAMOUS PERDIANS TO EVER LIVE MACMILLAN?!?

* Giggles*
Yup, that’s me!!

YOU’RE ONE OF THE RICHEST PEOPLE ON THE PLANET
WHY ARE YOU A BOUNTY HUNTER??

I mean... It’s fun!
You kinda run out of things to do after you have so much money for so long.

Wait... Nobody ever figured out what happened to your parents??
Do you know?

Of course I know! I was the one who killed them.

WHAT!?

Yup! They weren’t great people at all so I did what had to be done...
* Shrugs *
But enough about me, what about you?
What’s your name?

My name is Array Thunder.
Anything else you want to tell me?

Hm... I do.
You put up a surprisingly good fight, especially for your age.
* looks at the sky from the window above *
But you got really scared of getting seriously hurt, why?

Uhh... I'd rather not share.

Oh I see... You got a special someone waiting for you back home?

...

I was right! Who are they??

...
* Hits her over the head *
S-Shut up!!

Ow... Okay Okay!!

What about you??

Uhh... I don’t have anybody.
Actually... I used to.

Oh?

Keyword being “used to”.
My ex girlfriend broke up with me a few months ago...

Oh, I’m sorry to hear that.
* Hands her some of the candy from the bowl *
Here, have some of this.
* tries to smile *
I know it’s not much but I hope it cheers you up.

* Smiles *
Thank you..

* Grabs some of the candy for himself *
Ew! This is all old people candy...

You’re right, it is...

Of course Artender would have this kind of candy...
I feel bad for the kids.

Yeah that... Sucks.

Back outside Survey was still struggling to run away from Viktor.

JUST GET AWAY FROM ME!!

Suddenly, Viktor stopped walking. Survey was so confused. He was like a machine that just malfunctioned. He slowly walked towards the masked figure and waved in front of his head.

Are you... Gonna say something??

...

Am I just talking to myself!?
ANSWER ME!!

...

Viktor started to walk again, ushering Survey to do the same. Survey started running away from him again and the chase continued. They ran past the side of the house where Array and Lorelai were sitting and chatting.

...he was just sitting there rolling around so to play in with what he was doing I opened the window and said hello, neighbor!

* Laughs *
Oh that was good.
So do you have any more stories to tell?

Oh yeah!!
I do have one-

Survey looked over at the two chatting and laughing in the windowsill and got very upset.

WH- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!??
* points at Lorelai *
WHO IS THAT??

Calm down dude!
We’re safe now, it’s fine!!

OH WAIT!
* stands up *
VIKTOR!!
STOP THE JOB IS OFF!!

WHAT!?

YEAH
WE’RE NOT GONNA KILL THEM!
ACTUALLY, LETS JUST GO ALREADY!!

O-OKAY!

Lorelai jumped over the windowsill and into the front yard. She turned back to Array and started to speak.

Hey kid!

Yeah??

I’m gonna need something as proof to Xtress that we “killed you”!!

Alright!!
Uh...
* Looks around *
Here take my sweater! I don’t really need it anymore its kind of bloody from us fighting!

Array threw his sweater into the yard. Lorelai picked it up and signaled Viktor in the direction of the forest. The two vanished from sight and Array jumped out of the window and ran up to Survey.

WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED!?

I’m... Not sure...
The girl stabbed my hand but then felt bad so she let us live.

Yeah, that’s nice but what about the pies?!

Oh, right!
Stay out here I’ll go grab them!!

THANK YOU

I want to leave this place already!

Array quickly dashed back inside and grabbed the pies upstairs and quickly came back out, he handed a pie to Array and the two started walking back to the party. After about 45 minutes of walking they finally arrived and knocked on the door. G heard the knocking and opened the door.

WHERE WERE YOU GUYS!?

We uhh... Had a run in with some not so nice people...

Oh dear.
Did you guys get hurt?

Not me but little blondie here did.

WHA-
* Rushes over to Array *
(Worried) ARE YOU OKAY ARRAY??

I-I’m trying to be.
* Puts up his hand *
It hurts a lot but I’ll be fine.
* Smiles *
We got the pies though!

Oh sweet!

Bushra suddenly entered the scene and grabbed the pies from the two’s hands.

Hope your hand heals soon by the way, Array!

...thanks.

Well alright then... come on in you two!

And so, the party was saved! Everyone continued to have a good time and dance and eat all the food that there was. After the party was over they all went out and let the kids go treat or treating together, ending off the night back at the party. Towards midnight, everyone started to leave, and by 1 in the morning Artender and the kids finally left. Marking the end of a successful night.

That went well, right Bushra?

Yeah, it did!

I’m glad that everything turned out fine.
We did good.

We sure did.

Hey Bushra!

Yeah G?

The night might not be over just yet!

Eh?
What do you mean?

How about... we go treat or treating?

You know what, sure.
Wouldn’t hurt getting more candy.

The duo grabbed their bags and quickly ran out the door. Ready and excited for the rest of the long night they had ahead of them.

Pt. 2 THE JUMPSCARE FOUNDATION!

Starring...

In another time, in another place...

It was a peaceful night on Planet Perdiah, the Halloween spirit was in the air! The duo of G and Bushra were on their way back from trick or treating after they left the Halloween party. They collected so much candy from trick or treating! Bushra was driving the car while G was watching outside. They had a long road ahead of them.

Man, we got so much candy this year!
Isn’t that so awesome, Bushra?

...meh.

That’s not a very Bushra-like response.
* Giggles *
What’s the problem?

Those darn ladies kept saying “Oh, you guys are too old for trick or treating!”
Peh!

Hey, don’t listen to them.
You know it’s not true!
* Chuckles *
Besides, it’s not like this is our last Halloween or whatever.

Yeah, you are right...
Come to think of it, if we are both still 17... then does that mean-

Bushra, look out!

Bushra suddenly stopped the car as the two almost hurt themselves in the process.

G, what did you do that for?!
You scared the heck out of me!

You were going too fast!

Nah, that was moderate speed at best!

Tsch, okay.
* Stretches his arms *
We should just be glad we didn’t get hurt-

G suddenly noticed something and stopped talking.

Why did you stop talking?
Got a frog in your throat?

Bushra looked where G was pointing at and saw an abandoned building in the middle of nowhere.

Woah...
* Looks at Bushra *
Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

Yeah, I know an abandoned building when I see one.
* shrugs *
Oh well, back to home we go.

Bushra tried starting the car, but the engines weren't working.

You gotta be kidding me.

Huh?
What's wrong?
* Covers his mouth while chuckling *
Did you forget which pedal starts the car again?

Wait, what?
NO!

The two of them get out of the car to check up on the engines.

The darn thing doesn't want to work.
It's probably because of the sudden stop we had.

Bushra tried mixing and matching all the wires only for the car to

make rumbling sounds and for its lights to go out.

And... there it goes.
* Sighs *
As you can clearly see, I’m not qualified to fix this thing.

Maybe we can say “please”, and it will work?

Life isn’t like a video game, G.
It can’t just magically start working on its own.

But what if it did...

Sigh.
Let’s just try to find some help.

Bushra looked at the road in front of them. There were no lights, no oncoming vehicles, nothing. Their car stopped working at the worst possible place imaginable.

Great, NOW what do we do?

We could... I don’t know...
* Points in front of him *
Explore that abandoned building?

Absolutely not.
Not in a million years!
* Crosses his arms *
I have had my fair share of visiting abandoned places.

* Tries gluing the parts together *
I would rather try fixing this cluster than risk it all.

Suit yourself then.

G waved Bushra goodbye and started walking towards the building on his own.

(What an idiot...)

Bushra was determined to get this thing to work but deep down, he knew this wasn’t going to work out. Even if he glued this thing together, it was going to fall apart in a matter of seconds. He looked back to see where G was, only to not see him anywhere.

(Sigh, where is he now...)

Bushra left the car behind to find out where G was hiding. He better not be pulling a prank on me, Bushra thought to himself. He looked everywhere EXCEPT for the building and when he realized he was nowhere to be found, he looked at the ominous building in front of him with a frown.

Of course, he went there.

Bushra sighed and gripped his fishing rod.

I guess I have no other choice.

Bushra looks behind him and stares at the car with sadness.

We will be back soon, Bushra Jr.
Just wait for us here!

And so, Bushra entered the building while holding his breath. He couldn’t be sure if it had poisonous gas inside of it or not! After walking for a bit, he found out where they were in. It was an abandoned factory. Bushra was relieved that it wasn’t one of Hood’s old bases for a change. It was too dark for him to see so he looked for a light source to use. After walking for a bit, he noticed he was stepping on something... yucky.

Ugh...

Bushra tried his hardest to not step on the litter. It was too gross for him. He was wondering why there were dirty dishes all around the building. Or maybe this wasn’t a factory after all...

After checking the walls for a couple of minutes, Bushra sensed a locker next to him. He tried opening it with the best of his ability and after a few tries, he managed to open it. He turned his back to look inside for potential light sources only to hear a terrifying groaning noise from somewhere not too far away.

Haha, REAL funny, G!
* Points at the darkness *
I KNOW that’s you!

No response. Bushra didn’t want to think about the potential dangers this place might hide and continued looking for a light source. And finally, he was able to find a flashlight.

AHA! BINGO!
* Chuckles *
TAKE THAT, YOU MISERABLE PLACE!

Bushra turned on the flashlight and started investigating his whereabouts. This clearly wasn’t a factory at all! It was a... Pizzeria?

Oh... great.

Great what?

Bushra almost fell on his butt after G’s sudden appearance.

G, what the heck man?!
Don’t scare me like that!

Oops, my bad.

Where were you this whole time?
I have been looking for you!

Oh, me?
I was just looking around for something to help with our car.

She has a name, you know!
* Shakes his head *
But never mind that!
I know you got inside because you wanted to goof off!

That’s... partially true also.

Ugh... I’m tired.

Did you also hear that sound?
It was terrifying!

Yeah, yeah.
* Holds G’s left arm *
Let’s get out of here before this whole thing becomes a terrible creepypasta story.

A what now?

Bushra didn’t answer, he was trying to hurry before something creepy happened. The two rushed towards the exit, only for it to close on its own.

Great.
Just what we needed.

W-what just happened?!

Gee, what do you think?

We are stuck because... there was heavy wind?

NO!
It’s because this dang place is haunted!

...oh.

Bushra tried pulling the door open himself, but it wasn’t working. They were now stuck inside.

Great.

What’s wrong?

We are stuck inside, obviously!

...have you tried pushing the door as well?

Bushra suddenly became red out of embarrassment.

Of course I tried!

Bushra turned his back and tried pushing the door instead. It didn’t open this time either.

Oh no!
* Tries pushing the door alongside Bushra *
We really are stuck!

Aha!
* Points at G *
I knew I was right!

Eh?

...never mind that.
* Coughs *
So, let me get this straight.

We are somewhere I would not call an abandoned factory...
Very snazzy.

W-What do we do now?

I guess we can try calling for help...

Bushra pulled out his cellphone and dialed Artender's phone number.

If he gets mad at us, I'm blaming the whole thing on YOU, G.

G didn't respond from shame as the two waited for Artender to answer their call.

Come on... come on...

Bushra started the call and waited for a response. To their surprise however, Artender responded to their call... but with a catch.

Oh, thank goodness you are here, buddy!
See, we are kind of stuck inside a pizzeria thing and-

But the person on the other side wasn't Artender. No, it was a glitchy, unintelligible voice, rambling nonsense.

Uhhh… what?
Your connection's a bit messy, Tender boy.
Is Teo playing with the phone or what?

The glitchy voice didn't stop talking and Bushra decided to end the call.

What did he say?
Are they coming for us?

No...

W-why not?

Because I couldn’t talk with him, dummy!

But he responded to your call!

Yes, but since this dang place is haunted for some bizarre reason, we can’t call for help!

Maybe someone might find it suspicious to see an empty car-

Bushra Jr.

...yeah that, in front of an abandoned building and help us?

Meanwhile:

Ooh, jackpot boys!

Hey!

We can sell this hunk of junk for riches!

But boss, realistically we would only get a few hundred bucks back from this investment.
Besides, we are wanted criminals so...

Blegh, quit with the nerd talk and help lil' old me push this thing!

That's the spirit!
Just help Joyce, Murray!

(Sigh, why do I even bother...)

Back inside, the duo decided to look for another exit themselves instead of waiting for a non-existent rescue team. Bushra went first with his flashlight while G followed him from behind. This place was far creepier than they imagined.

So, uh... how's life?

Would have preferred being literally anywhere else but hey, it could have been worse.

The two heard the groaning sound again and looked at each other in worry.

I-I'm sure that was nothing!

Yup!
It must have been a... crow or something!
Yeah!

Yeah, obviously!
Didn’t know Marigold was in here with us!

Haha, yeah!

It can’t be a monster out to get us or anything!

E-exactly!

The two looked at each other awkwardly for a second and then continued their search. They went through so many corridors, leading to a bunch of different rooms. There was a bathroom, a kitchen, the toilets and so much more! Bushra thought the building was much bigger than how it looked from the outside.

Stupid corridors.

Hey, it ain’t so bad!
At least we are having some quality bonding time together!

I thought the party and the trick or treating were more than enough.

What’s the problem with having more?

Hmpf.

After walking for a few more minutes, they came across an office. They decided to take a break inside. It had two doors on the sides and one vent behind them. It also had a functioning camera system with a bunch of monitors stuck on the table.

What an odd little place.

Yeah, it’s making me feel cramped.

Calm down buddy, this is not a cave or anything.

Why did you mention that... now it’s going to mess me up even more!

Oh, for the love of-
It’s just... an office with an oddly specific layout, that’s all!

Alright,
* Holds his stomach *
If you say so...

Bushra decided to relax on the single moving chair inside the office and G watched the cameras out of boredom.

Say, G.
Can you check inside the lockers for food?

Oh yeah sure.
* Looks around *
Where are they?

Outside the office probably.
I saw a few on our way here.

Ooh okay then.
Can you make sure to check the cameras until I’m back?

Why?

In case, you know... something shows up.

Oh, please!
We don’t even have to check up on the cameras.
It’s just the two of us here!

Suddenly, the whole building shook like an earthquake was happening underneath them.

I-It must have been the heavy rain!
Yeah!
The heavy rain, obviously!

...just look at the cameras, okay?

Ugh, fine.

* Cracks his knuckles *
The sooner you get back, the sooner I can go back to lying down.

As G was looking for food, Bushra was keeping an eye on the cameras. It was such a boring task. Practically nothing was happening in the cameras besides a tired looking G sometimes waving at Bushra through them. But suddenly, one of the cameras started glitching. It was from a room very close to G's whereabouts.

Huh... that's odd.

Suddenly, the phone next to the monitors started ringing. Bushra was hesitant to pick it up; especially since the last time he tried calling someone, it creeped him out more than anything.

Um… hello?

Hello, hello!

Hi..?
Who is this?

Welcome to your new job at Larry's!

"Larry's?"

Larry's is a restaurant chain first started by the glorious Jerry Fish!

"Jerry Fish?"
What the heck is this supposed to mean?

Is this supposed to be pre-recorded or something?

Now, I know what you might be thinking!
“Is this pre-recorded?”
Well... yes and no at the same time.

What?
What are you talking about?

See, it’s like a 4th wall thing.

Huh?
There are like only two walls here!
The other sides have doors attached to them!

...forget it.
Just be vary of the potential danger you two are in!

Lemme guess, the monster’s name is Larry, right?
Larry is trying to kill us.

What? No, of course!
That animatronic became defunct ages ago!

So, then what’s so dangerous about this dirty place?

See, it’s-
[PLEASE INSERT A DIME TO CONTINUE YOUR CALL.]

Dang it!

Bushra checks his pockets for a spare dime and thankfully finds it.
He inserts it into the slot and waits for a response.

-and that’s how you are supposed to beat the monster!

Uh... sorry phone dude, phone guy, whatever you prefer to be called
but I missed all the details.

Excuse me?
How did that happen?

Call’s time ran out!

Oh right.
I forgot to replace that a while ago.

You a regular here?

Eh... more or less.

Wait so... what even are you?
I can’t contact my friends outside but I can talk to you just fine?

See the answer to that is filled with paradoxes so I’m just not gonna

bother telling you about that...

Works for me!

Wait... how quick are you to accept that response?

I have encountered weirder things in the past.

(confused) What do you mean?

One of my friends adopted a sentient potato once, it’s a long story.

Huh, that sure sounds interesting, alright!

Yeah, yeah.
Just give me the exposition dump quickly so I can save my best friend!

Okay!
So, you two are dealing with a creature named… THE JUMPSCARE!

The what now?

THE JUMPSCARE.

Is that seriously its name?

Yeah, his name is just THE JUMPSCARE.

That’s a bit on the nose, ain’t it?

Well... yes but he is nothing to scoff at!
He’s a dangerous monster that haunted this building for generations!

Hm... that’s odd.

You need to lure the beast away from your location with the audio lure!

With what…
* Points at the button *
This thing?

Yeah, that’s the one!
Just pick a room and use it!

Alright.

Bushra pressed the button as the once glitchy camera stopped glitching. But the camera he used the audio lure on started glitching instead.

Great job, newbie!
Now if you will excuse me, I need to go!

Wait, what, why?!
I have so many more questions!

The new Mandy & Friends episode premieres today and I just can’t miss it!
Good luck!

W-wait!
* Tries to contact the mysterious figure *
Come back!
I have so many more questions!

Bushra?
I heard you talking to yourself a few seconds ago.
Is everything alright?

No, G.
We lost contact... AGAIN!

Wait, what?

It’s a lot to explain but this guy on the phone told me all about the monster!

Bushra, are you sure you are doing alright?

I searched through the whole place, and I haven’t seen a monster anywhere!

But it’s true!

I was going to keep it a surprise, but I suppose you need this more than me.
* Hands Bushra over canned soup *
I found this in one of the lockers!
I’m not sure if it’s expired or not but you clearly need to eat something to clear your mind!

Sigh... fine.

Bushra opened the can and slowly drank the soup. He felt much calmer afterwards.

You feeling better?

Yeah... thanks, G.

No problem, Bushra.

Perhaps you were right.
Maybe there ISN’T a monster after all!

There ya’ go!

Suddenly, the whole room started flashing red. There was some sort of error in one of the systems.

W-what’s happening?!

Gah, there must be an error in one of the systems!
* Looks over the buttons *
But how do I fix it...

B-Bushra?

WHAT?!

Why is that camera glitching?

G, buddy.
I will get to it when I get to it!

Bushra decides to press all the buttons randomly to fix this mess.

Here goes nothing.

Bushra first presses the green button as the dispenser next to the chair gives him an expired soda.

Nope, not this one!

G also decided to join in and started pressing random buttons. The first few randomly closed and opened the doors on the sides while the last yellow button he pressed makes a panel appear from under the table.

[HI, I’M HANDY LARRY!]
[WELCOME TO THE FIRST DAY OF YOUR EXCITING NEW CAREER!]
[I WILL BE YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE TO HELP YOU GET STARTED!]

Nope, that’s not the one either!

G tried pushing Handy Larry under the table again, but it was resilient.

[PLEASE DO NOT USE FORCE ON HANDY LARRY.]
[HANDY LARRY DOES NOT APPRECIATE THAT.]

G, shut that thing off!

I’m trying!
But I can’t!

[PLEASE TYPE YOUR NAME AS SEEN ABOVE ON THE KEYPAD.]

Uh...

G randomly clicks on the keys.

[IT SEEMS YOU HAD SOME TROUBLE WITH THE KEYPAD.]
[I SEE WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO TYPE AND I WILL AUTOCORRECT IT FOR YOU!]
[WELCOME... RWQFSFASXC!]

Gosh dang it, G!

What?!
I might as well do what it says, maybe it might shut itself off!

Bushra pressed on another button as a maintenance panel appeared from under the table.

Aha, I got it!

Bushra clicked on the “Reboot Everything” button as the red flashes slowly and surely started disappearing. Bushra was still sweating after the fact.

Phew, that was close!

Yeah...
TOO close...

[HELLO, I’M STILL HERE.]

(sarcasm) Wonderful.

Yeah sorry.
I will try to turn it off!

[IT’S NOT NICE TO TALK BEHIND SOMEONE’S BACK!]

* Trying to push Handy Larry under the table *
So... you think this creature is legit?

Yeah... I really do think so.

Hm... how are you so sure?

Because when it appears on the cameras, it starts glitching it!
What was its name again... oh, right.
THE JUMPSCARE!

“THE JUMPSCARE”?
That’s a goofy name.

Sssh... don’t say it.

Why?
Does it like kill you when you say it multiple times or something?

I don’t know but you might never know!

Fair.

G notices something on the cameras. Or rather, a lack thereof.

Oh yeah, speaking of which... Bushra?

Yeah?

G pointed at the cameras. There was no glitching coming from any of them.

Is this normal?

I’m... not sure.

Bushra pressed on the audio lure button to distract the beast but there still wasn’t any glitching coming from the cameras.

Maybe check the kitchen?

I will, don’t worry.

After a bit of looking, they were certain the beast was nowhere to be seen. So, if he wasn’t in the cameras, then that means...

G, close the doors!
Right now!

W-what?!

Just do it!

The two closed the door right as the beast was charging towards the left side of the office.

EEK!
Holy crap, it’s real!

See?

I’m so sorry for ever doubting you!

You are dang right about that G, but now is not the time for that!
* Pushes against the door *
Gosh dang it, we have to lure it somewhere else!

Suddenly, the sounds of the door knocking stopped.

Phew, it’s gone.

I wouldn’t be so sure of that!
I didn’t even lure him away.

Maybe... it got bored and went to sleep?

The two suddenly heard something crawling down the vents.

Oh phooey.

The two started randomly pressing the buttons again to find a system that controls the vents, but it was too little too late. The beast was about to enter the office.

What are we gonna do, what are we gonna do?!

We can uh...

[YOU. ARE. SCREWED!]

Don’t listen to that thing.
We can just...
* Points at the door *
Run away!

That’s your idea?!

I don’t see you coming up with anything better!

The two opened the doors and made a run for it. They didn’t know where they were headed but if they weren’t caught by THE JUMPSCARE, they were fine with it.

After a while, the two heard the vent breaking apart. THE JUMPSCARE was on the loose.

Gah, it’s coming!

EEK!
Why is it even trying to kill us?!

Geez, I don’t know!

You got any theories?

M-maybe it’s the ghost of a kid who was killed in this establishment long ago!

That’s… oddly specific but it’s possible.

The two look behind them and see THE JUMPSCARE for the first time. It was a giant cloaked figure with an evil grin trying to catch its prey.

ACK!
It’s here!

Just run for it!

The two ran across the building without turning their backs. It was like they were running inside a big maze. One door led to, yet another room filled with doors and so on. It was getting hard to tell where they were going.

During the chase, G grabbed one of the props on the walls and threw it at the beast. That would distract him for a bit. He noticed Bushra pointing at the main stage with the destroyed animatronics standing on it. The two ran towards the stage and hid behind it.

I think...
* Wipes off his sweat *
I think we lost him.

Suddenly, the figure appeared from behind them with a terrifying roar.

ROARRR!

EEK!

And so, the chase continued. After running for a while, G noticed a locker in one of the corridors.

Over here!

The two quickly got inside the locker and locked it just as fast. It was barely enough space for the two of them, so they were both cramped inside. They were both sweating heavily as they saw THE JUMPSCARE looking around for its prey.

T-This is so uncomfortable!

I know!
* Tries to move his arms *
I can barely move my arms!

G tried pushing against Bushra to get more space, only for Bushra to respond with a knee slam on the stomach.

ACK!

THE JUMPSCARE heard his grunt as it ran towards the locker.

What was that for?!

It’s a self-defense mechanism!
Sorry!

Since when did you have that?!

Not the time, G!
* Opens the locker *
Come on, we gotta lose our trail!

And so, the two continued running until they reached a dead end.

This is getting ridiculous!

Yeah!
We can’t outrun it for forever, we need to think of something!

I- I don’t know!

Maybe we can collect some of its pages or something!
Perhaps it will go away then!

Maybe we can... I don’t know.
Tame it and make it our new friend!

That’s the dumbest idea I have ever heard, buddy.
And that’s coming from ME!

Bushra quickly dodged THE JUMPSCARE’s attack and rolled towards G.

New plan, buddy.
We both attack him on three!

O-okay!

THE JUMPSCARE was confused on what they were trying to do. For all it knew, they were playing games with it.

One… THREE!

W-what?!
You skipped two!

Just attack him already!

The two tried attacking the beast with their powers and the beast was fighting back. It tried attacking them with its claws.

* Dodges it *
YOW!
Watch out, G!

G was fighting toe to toe with THE JUMPSCARE with his hammer. Bushra on the other hand was throwing stuff at it because he had no use for his powers.

Hold him steady, G!
I’m about to destroy this thing’s face!

I-If you say so!

Right before Bushra was about to throw something, G managed to get a lucky shot on THE JUMPSCARE’s face and revealed its true form. It was a cub like creature, holding its nose in pain.

What the...

Here goes nothing!

Bushra, stop!

What, why?!

Bushra dropped his weapon to the ground and rushed towards G.

What’s the big idea, G?!

Bushra, look!

G pointed at THE JUMPSCARE’s face.

What in Perdiah...

Yeah, it turns out it was just a magical ghostly cub type thing after all!
* Tries to comfort the beast *
Perhaps it’s looking for its MAMA JUMPSCARE.

I... highly doubt that.

While G was comforting the beast, Bushra was taking notes.

Aww, who’s a good boy?
Who’s a good jumpscare?
You are!

Hm... so it wasn’t an animatronic bear…
* Ticks off a point from his list *
It wasn’t a ghost either... kind of.
I will give that a “maybe”.

Bushra noticed THE JUMPSCARE licking G’s face to show him his appreciation. But as a result, G’s makeup was messed up now.

G, don’t get attached to that.

Too late, I gave him a nickname already, so I’m emotionally attached now.

Sigh... okay then.
What’s its name...

David!

That’s the most basic name ever.
You sure you are not doing a Sarpo impression?

Pfft... please!
* Chuckles *
It’s still better than THE JUMPSCARE though!

Yeah, fair point.
* Looks at the playful THE JUMPSCARE *
So uhh... G?
You might want to ask your new friend to open the exits.

Oh, right!
* Pets THE JUMPSCARE *
You want to let us free, David?
We both want to get out.

THE JUMPSCARE silently nods and opens the exit door.

Thanks, David!

The two were ready to leave this cursed place only for G to feel bad about leaving David behind.

G?
You better not be thinking what I’m thinking!

...

Oh, for the love of...

G goes back to pet THE JUMPSCARE.

Hey, big man!
You want to come with?

THE JUMPSCARE looks outside and nods. It was like it hasn’t seen the light of day in years.

Come on, follow us!

Yeah, yeah.
(sarcasm) Woo-hoo.

The two lead THE JUMPSCARE to the outside world and it looks at the newly rising sun like the best thing it has ever laid its eyes upon.

See, he likes it!

* Sighs *
Yeah, how great is that...

THE JUMPSCARE first looked at the forest ahead and then the two people who freed it.

B-bye bye, David!
* Sniffs *
We will miss you!

Are you... crying?

Yes!

Unbelievable.

The two waved goodbye at THE JUMPSCARE as it ran towards the forest, never to be seen again.

We are not telling Artender or the others about this, right?

Nope!

Good.
* Takes a sip from the leftover soup *
Also, G, you know that thing kills people, right?

W-what?

Yeah, didn’t you see all the dead bodies in the corridors?

...oh.

Yeah, good job setting a deadly monster on the loose, G.
Real smooth.

H-hey! I didn’t know about that before I let him go!

Meh, I don’t care.
That’s a problem on your end.

Sigh... why do you always do this...

* shrugs *
What can I say?
It’s fun.

And so, the two stood still on the other side of the road, waiting for a kind person to pick them up.

A few hours later, in the morning.

* Opens the door *
Woah, where have you guys been?
Everyone left the party already-

Screw off.

We don’t want to talk about it.

Okay, okay, geez.
I just asked a question for pete’s sake!

The two entered the building after Artender and then went to do their own things. Artender was really confused.

Geez, what’s their problem?

I dunno but we best leave them alone.

Yeah... good idea.

Say, while you are it.
Want to join me and Cloe on a fun game of “who gets to clean this place”?

...I will pass.

I’m just messing.
* chuckles *
We were just eating some candy; do you want in?

Oh yeah, sure!
Let me get the kids too!

Great!
See you there!

And so, Team Bushra decided to keep this adventure all to themselves. The rest of their friends would live blissfully unaware of THE JUMPSCARE’s existence... or would they?!

BOOO!
GOT YOU!

END OF HALLOWEEN!

TE:R
ADVENTURES
SRP OF THE FUTURE
TURTLEDOODLE1
SUPERTAILS32
SOHEKUN

SRP OF THE FUTURE

In another time, in another place... 300 years into the future...

It was a peaceful day on Planet Perdiah. Hundreds of years ago, a catastrophe happened, causing a global blackout. As a result, the technological developments regressed as well as the people of the planet. The once blooming forests of the past were now covered in sand, creating a desert in their place. No one knew what caused this disaster to happen but one thing was for sure. The heroes and villains of the past have all but perished due to the passage of time. Well... all except for one.

A mother rabbit was running for her life after coming across an ancient robot. She knew she was going to be caught eventually but she had to try her best... for her children's future. The robot was scanning the area, trying to look for the rabbit in question. He turned on his radar vision to see where she had gone. The vicious look on his face was hard to ignore.

The robot slowly but patiently walked towards the nearby cactus. He picked up the cactus and ripped it off from the ground, revealing the scared rabbit hiding behind it. The rabbit closed her eyes, waiting for her demise... until she felt something petting her.

She looked up and saw the robot in question petting her and then wave her "hello". The rabbit didn't know what was happening but took this opportunity to get away from the ancient robot.

Oh, there you are!
* tries catching her breath *
I told ya' not to go after those critters, Sharps!
You know they get easily scared!

[…]

Sigh.

* shakes her head *

Anyhow, did you find out where the signal was coming from?

Sharps silently nodded and pointed at the previous location of the cactus he just ripped off.

How convenient.

* stretches her back *

Okay, let’s see here...

The 1/4 Traveler the rest Human girl walked towards the spot and started analyzing what was underneath the sand with her handy tablet.

Hm... well, I’ll be damned.

The girl turned back and gave Sharps a thumbs up. Sharps waited a few seconds before giving her a thumbs up back.

Alright, since it doesn’t seem to be located too deep, I suppose one of these little guys should do the trick.

The girl reached out to her pockets and picked out an orb. She then threw it to the ground as the orb gained noodle limbs as well as ears & two tails. The servant-bot saluted the girl as it waited for her orders.

Unit #1, dig down this spot.
There seems to be an ancient relic down there.

The servant-bot turned its arms to small drills as it started digging down a hole. After a few minutes passed by, the servant-bot arrived at the surface while holding a tape on its hand.

* smiles *
Now, that’s more like it!

The girl pressed the button on top of the robot as it transformed back to a regular orb. Sharps was intrigued by the technology even though he didn’t say a single word.

Well, that was a productive day.
* looks over to Sharps *
Come on, Sharps.
Let’s go home and get this thing running.

And so, the two went home with another successful find under their belt. They went through many familiar locations on their way there. The once magical Enchanted Forest was no more, in its place, a river was created. Mount Neverends was now a perhibitted area of the desert that no one in their right minds wanted to approach. And most importantly, Town Mile, a town that was rumored to be destroyed long ago, was the location of their home.

It was night time by the time the two had reached their small hut. There weren’t any other houses nearby, Leco just preferred it this way.

Welp, back where we belong.
* stretches her back *
What a tiring day, eh, Sharps?

Sharps silently nodded as he slowly walked towards his usual resting spot. It was a simple chair right next to a charging cable. When he went to sit down, he saw Leco holding her lobby.

Drat.
Seems like I'm kind of hungry.
* looks over to the robot *
You want anything, Sharps?

Sharps silently glanced at Leco with his usual expression.

Oh, don't give me that!
* crosses her arms *
I know it's too late to eat (and that I could get fat) but that doesn't change the fact that I want to eat something, 'kay?

Sharps nodded as he picked up the cable on the ground and plugged it to the core on his chest. After preparing her meal, Leco called Sharps to sit alongside her for dinner, even though he wasn't going to eat anything. It was the least he could do for her.

* takes a bite out of the cooked beef *
Want to check out what we found today?

Sharps nodded and looked around to see where the tape was located. He saw it sitting idly on his sofa and stretched his arm to grab it. He put the tape in the tape player, connected to an old school tv screen.

When the tape started playing, they saw a girl dancing alongside a human man. The girl looked at the camera and started introducing herself and her friends. She said her name was Mandy and this was her show Mandy & Friends. Leco chuckled at the stupidity of the show while Sharps stared blankly at the TV the whole way. The tape was quite short however as it was just the intro of this supposed show.

Can you believe that people used to watch this stuff back then?
* sarcastically grins *
What a joke.
* turns off the monitor *
How much do you wanna bet the main lead is gonna break up with the dude in the intro?

No response from Sharps. He was still staring at the empty screen.

Aw, come on, Sharps!
Don’t be like that!
* points at him *
You know I recalibrated your voice modules, I know you can speak.

Sharps turned towards Leco and started talking for the very first time in days.

[...sure.]

That’s more like it.
* grins *
To think you would have still been stranded in that cave if I hadn’t found you...

[I... appreciate the rescue, Leco.]

Oh no no, please don’t thank me.
Honestly, I oughta thank you instead.

[...me?]

Yep.
You have been so helpful ever since I found you all those months ago.

Sharps looked away without saying a single word but Leco realized he seemed... happy. This was just Sharps’ way of showing gratitude after all. She picked up the tablet from her bag and showed Sharps the scans they gathered all these months.

Seven out of the ten spots we suspected had ancient relics underneath them.
So according to my calculations, we are getting closer to the main source of these relics.

Sharps nodded. Finding relics from his time was... oddly comforting.

The one I’m suspecting the most is under... ugh, under Town Ceaser.

Sharps was confused and decided to ask.

[What’s wrong with that town?]

...it’s nothing, really.
Personal reasons.

Leco, in attempt to change the subject, looked at the time on the clock.

Well, it’s getting late, Sharps.
We will need to get up early for tomorrow’s search, so...
* stands up *
I know you technically don’t need to sleep but you can rest your servos for just a bit.

Sharps twitched his head to the side, like he was asking a question.

Don’t worry about me.
I will just... fix up one of the units before resting.
* smiles *
I appreciate your concern though.

Sharps gave her a thumbs up as he stood up and went to sit at his usual spot.

See you tomorrow, friend.

[See you as well.]

Sharps watched as Leco went back to her half room, half workshop. He then looked at his side. His resting spot was right next to a giant house window so he was able to look at the outside world anytime he pleased. He looked up and saw the beautiful stars up in the sky.

Ever since Leco rescued him, Sharps felt... incomplete. He had all the tools to do anything after his repair but he didn't know why he had access to them to begin with. His life before the rescue was blank, his memory banks had no records of his previous life. Or rather, they were corrupted from the damage. Leco theorized that he was a servant-bot but that idea never sat right with him. He felt like he was built for something greater.

He looked at the night sky one last time before resting his servos for the day. He hoped that he would find the purpose of his creation sooner than later.

Meanwhile; on another place in Planet Perdiah, a group of hooded figures were building structures on the remains of Town Unda. Even though Hood had passed away long time ago due to an... "unclosed accident", her beliefs still lived on.

Another one to the left, another one to the right...

Ugh... this is too much, boss.
Can't we just rest for the day-

Nonsense, boy!
* grins *
Don't you know that our predecessor, Hood Riley, was able to conquer this planet in a matter of years?
She surely didn't complain about regular busy work!

Hmpf... you are right.
* picks up a giant piece of metal from the ground *
Sorry, mister J.

That’s SIR J to you, waste of human space.

The Bandit Leader looked to his side and noticed one of his “hooded bandits” lightly touching him on the shoulder, trying to get his attention.

What is it, vermin?

Sorry to interrupt sir but one of our men just arrived from their search.

And what did they say?

They said that they found a town close to ours.
They were able to explore it without getting caught, there doesn’t seem to be any “super natural” Perdians around.

Ooh, perfect!
This must be a sign from the gods above!
* chuckles *
You are off the hook this time, vermin.
Call your friends here to fully solidfy my decision.

O-of course, sir!

The Hooded Bandit rushed towards the middle of the unfinished town and whistled loudly. Every Hooded Bandit looked at him as they saw their leader arriving at the scene.

Rest well tonight, my Hooded Bandits!
Tomorrow, we will conquer that nearby town and show the planet that we live on!

“AY AY!”

And as we conquer more and more towns, we will be an unstoppable force!

“AY AY!”

And soon enough... we will be able to continue Ms. Riley’s dream and take control over this waste of a planet!

Everyone in the crowd started shouting from excitement as they all split up to prepare their weapons for tomorrow.

What about you, sir?
Aren’t you gonna prepare your weapons too?

Oh, don’t you worry, vermin.
I will... with an astericks.

* raises his eyebrow *
What do you mean?

The Hooded Bandit watched as his boss looked behind him with a devilish smile, ready to unleash the project they have been working on for months.

The next morning; Leco yawned as she woke up from a deep sleep. She hasn't had a sleep this good in quite some time. She got up from her bed and decided to check what her best friend was up to.

Morning, Sharps.
* kicks the can on the ground *
How we handling today?

To her surprise however, he wasn't in his resting spot. She scratched her head and looked around the main hall. Just where the heck did Sharps go off to?

Suddenly, she heard sounds of rumbling coming from the kitchen. A burglar must have broken it, Leco thought to herself. She rushed towards her room to get her weapons. She looked for her trusted "unit" line of bots but couldn't find them anywhere. She thought this mysterious burglar must have stolen them by now. She looked around the room some more until she came across her giant trusted wrench, the very first tool she used back when she was still learning machinery. She put the wrench on her back and then rushed in to surprise the burglar... only to find Sharps and her bots making breakfast. Sharps looked at Leco and tilted his head to the side in confusion.

...oh.

* puts the wrench down *
H-Hey guys! I didn’t know that you knew how to cook, Sharps!

Sharps gave her a thumbs up while the three bots were fighting over if they wanted to put peppers or salt on the food.

I... was worried that someone broke in, that’s all.

[...I see.]

But little did I know that my robot friend was making breakfast... for me.

Sharps nodded and delivered the food to her on a plate. She excitedly started eating, much to Sharps’ surprise. She really must have been hungry last night, he thought to himself.

And just as quickly, they were on their way to their next spot. Leco still seemed a bit down since Sharps brought up Town Ceaser but she was trying her best to be her usual self. She picked out her tablet from her bag and used it as a GPS of sorts.

They went through many familiar locations during their trip there. At least... familiar to Sharps himself. As they got closer and closer, Sharps realized that he went through these places all those years ago. When the two went through a destroyed town, Sharps stood in place for a bit as he noticed a dying tree stump in the mist of all the sand. Leco noticed Sharps not following behind her so she looked back to see what was up.

Hey, Sharps!

* raised her eyebrow *
Is everything alright?

Sharps looked at her with an uncertain feeling. He didn't know why this place felt so familiar in the first place. He just nodded as a response as the two continued their journey.

After a few hours had passed, they were finally at Town Ceaser. It was more advanced compared to the rest of the towns. Some people were building weapons to protect themselves from evil outside forces while others were farming with the little pieces of dirt they had.

The two stopped in their tracks as they noticed someone approaching them.

Oh, hello there strangers!
I'm the mayor of Town Ceaser!
* reaches out his cybernetic hand *
Nice to see you here-

The mayor suddenly stopped talking as he noticed who the robot was accompanied with. Sharps could feel the tension between the two.

...oh.
Leco.

Hey, chief.
* fake chuckles *
Good to see you here as well.

Hmpf.
* takes back his hand *
I’m sure you must have a good reason to come back here.

I sure do.
* shows him the tablet *
Me and my robot friend here have found evidence to suggest that there is ancient relics located under this very town.

Hm... is that so?

Sure is.

Hm...

* takes a step forward *
Don’t you worry, I will leave as soon as we get those relics out of the ground.
I can promise you that much.

...very well.
You are permitted to proceed.

...thanks.

Sharps watched as the two parted ways. The townsfolk all looked at the scene with a raised eyebrow but they soon continued on with their usual schedule. But some folks were still intrugied by this ancient robot hanging around their town.

Woah... is that the legend Fields?!

Which century is he from?
20XX?

Naw, too far fetched.
That thing looks like it was made last year at best!

Woo... cool robot man...

Are we sure that’s not a cyborg?

While everyone was talking about him, Sharps couldn’t bother as he just continued following behind Leco. They were here for a mission.

Okay...
* double clicks on the tablet *
I think... we are on top of our destination.

The two stopped on their tracks and looked under them. It certainly didn't seem different compared to the other parts of the desert but the thought of uncovering another ancient relic was too good to pass up.

Honestly, glad we found it early.

[Is it because you didn't want to spend more time here?]

Leco turned her back and looked at Sharps in shock. His observation was on point.

Hmpf.
...just a bit.

Sharps looked at Leco with a worried expression. He wanted to ask her more but didn't want her to feel bad. Much to his surprise however, she looked back at him with a smile.

Well, it doesn't really matter now anyways.
* smirks with her eyes closed *
Even since I rescued you from there, I felt as though I finally got a good pal that understands me, ya know?
* gives Sharps a thumbs up *
So, no need for talks like these, eh?

Sharps also gave her a thumbs up in response. He really was grateful of her for sticking by his side for so long.

Anyhow.
* looks at her tablet *
I suppose we can start the work now.

Sharps watched as Leco activated her servant-bots.

Alright you three.
Mission’s pretty simple.
Dig down... diagonally not straight down and open us a path to get there.

The three all saluted and got to work immedietly. The unit bots transformed their arms into drills and started digging the hole. While Leco was checking which parts of the sand shouldn’t be digged through due to the pressure points, Sharps was acting like a body guard. He looked around the town in case someone wanted to play dirty with them.

A-ha! Here it is!
The units seem to have reached the relic.
* points at the tablet for him to see *
Hm... it seems to be a rather big one.
I don’t think they can carry it by themselves.
* points at Sharps *
Do you mind staying here until I get back?
I wouldn’t want... the others to follow behind us.

Sharps nodded in response. He was... also curious about what could be under there. Not as much as Leco herself but still curious nontheless. He watched as Leco climbed down the stairway. But before he knew it, the inevitable happened.

Woah...
* almost loses her balance *
What on Perdiah was that?

Leco looked around in panic as the ground started shaking. This wasn't just a regular earthquake, something more powerful was on its way here. Before Leco could shout at Sharps for help, the earthquake got sronger. The digged up hole got covered in sand once again, causing Leco to get stuck underground.

Sharps?!
What's happening?!

Sharps looked at where the hole used to be and started clawing his way through it...but to no avail. It was too deep for him to reach Leco. He looked around to get some help from the townsfolk, not realizing that they would be the ones who needed his help after all.

The townsfolk still trying to recover from the earthquake were hit by none other than an invision! Sharps looked closely and saw a giant trojen horse looking robot, being controlled by the Hooded Bandits!

The people of Town Ceaser!
You are now under the rule of the glorious, Hooded Bandits!
If you keep it quiet, you will be peacefully integrated to our already growing army!
But... if you refuse... well, let's just say, it won't be a good scene.

The people started running around in panic while some went to get their weapons.

Oh well, don’t say we didn’t warn you!

And by the Bandit Boss’ demand, a bunch of Hooded Bandits jumped out of the horse, ready to cause havoc. Sharps didn’t know what he got himself into but he knew he had to save these people from these hooded figures.

Back underground, Leco was trying to find a way out of her prison. But as time went on, she realized that she wouldn’t be able to get out as long as the fight happening above continued. She sighed in dissapointment as she decided to explore what they originally came for.

At first, Leco thought her little bots just found a giant relic that they couldn’t carry. But as she went deeper and deeper, she noticed that this wasn’t just a simple relic of the past. No... it was a whole city underneath.

What on Earth...

As she kept walking, she noticed the broken pieces of her robot pals lying on the ground. She grabbed what remained of her robotic minion.

* sighs *
Whatever, man.
I was going to upgrade you guys soon anyway.

She started noticing more and more destroyed buildings as time went on and soon, came across a destroyed sign.

“Welcome to Diamond City!”, it wrote.

She used the sign to push herself onto the city borders and saw one big building standing in the middle of everything. It was far bigger than any other building she saw along the way. She slowly but surely walked towards it.

This is so strange...
A whole building? Just standing right here without any damage?
Just how on Perdiah did this thing last for so long?

Leco saw a hatch close to the building. She tried opening it but it was locked from the other side it seemed. So, she decided to continue her tracks.

She kicked the door right open and entered the building. The inside of the building was what she expected. Full of cobwebs, residuals, what have you. She looked everything inside in awe. The canteen, the medic room, a busted up secret prison room and so much more! Even though she wasn't even born yet when this place was founded, she could feel a sense of... nostalgia just going through the place. A lot of good memories were had here, she thought to herself.

It was mostly smooth sailing until she tried entering the final room inside the building. The office. She tried opening the door but it was extra locked up for some reason. She tried kicking it, shoulder bashing it... nothing was working.

But then, she had a different idea. Something she barely took advantage of... for a good reason. She sighed and looked at her tail in dissapointment. She used her tail to get inside the lock itself and open it from there. Surprising her however, it actually worked. She giggled at herself for the ridicilousness of it all and entered the room safe and sound.

Leco looked around the office with a weirded out expression. It was... weirdly clean compared to the other rooms of the building. Almost like this place was used recently. But what bothered her even

more was the photo stuck on the wall. She did a small jump and grabbed it from there. The photo was of a blonde guy and... Sharps?!

Meanwhile, Sharps was fighting against the evil Hooded Bandits! Both sides of the conflict were losing people by the second so Sharps knew he had to stop this before it was too late.

Hah! An old industry robot?
This will be a piece of cake!

The bandit tried hitting Sharps with a chain but Sharps grabbed it mid air and took it for himself.

W-What?!
What even are you?!

Sharps didn’t respond as he hit the guy with the same chain, causing him to fall on his knees.

GAH!

The bandit looked at Sharps in anger while Sharps looked at him with pity. Sharps suddenly heard sounds of screaming as he rushed to help them. The bandit also had his own set of reinforcements however.

Jack?! What happened?!

* holding his knee in pain *
That robot just attacked me!
We either need to destroy it or capture it for the boss!

Agreed.
* looks around *
Where is it now?

Gee, I don’t know!
* points at his right *
He went that way I think!

Sweet!

Grr... just help me up already!

No response.

What are you waiting for, just-

Jack stopped mid sentence as he felt the pressure of a gun behind his head.

W-What?!

The bandit shot Jack on the head before responding back.

Sorry luv’ but boss will CERTAINLY award the person who first captures that hunk of junk.
I certainly wouldn’t want you to steal MY glory.

The bandit chuckled as she looked at the warzone in front of her.
She had to play her cards right for this to work.

EEK! HELP!

He he, who you calling for help, little rat?!

You should be thanking us for getting rid of your dumb parents!

You said it, lad!

The boy closed his eyes, waiting for the final blow. But before the two bandits knew it, Sharps arrived in time with jet boost to save the little boy from them.

M-Mr. Robot..?

[Stay right here.]
[Don’t go out unless necessary.]

Okay...

Sharps gave the kid a thumbs up and then left the scene.

Hey, did the robot just take that kid?!

Gosh dang it!
* looks around *
Where are they now?

[Away from you two.]

The two bandits looked behind them with a scared expression. There it was, the cunning robot of the past. They readied their weapons, urging to fight him.

Stand back, you hunk of junk!

You don’t know what we are capable of!

Sharps kept silent and waited for the two’s first move. Trying to take advantage of it, a third bandit tried attacking Sharps from the behind, only to get laser blasted on the face. The two looked at the corpse of the man with a horrified look. They dropped their weapons and ran way from the scene like cowards.

Robot man!

Sharps looked next to him and saw a soldier approaching him with a happy look on his face. The soldier stopped his bike right next to

Sharps and reached out his hand.

Really gotta thank you for the support out there!
We saw you saving that kid without any second thoughts!
* points at his group *
Would you like to help us take these guys down?

Sharps nodded in response. The biker dude was so relieved that he didn't notice a Hooded Bandit approach behind him. Sharps stopped the Hooded Bandit at the last second by turning his arm into a sword and slicing them in half.

W-What?!
Where did they came from?!

[Lesson 1.]
[Never turn your back against the enemy.]

Meanwhile; the Bandit Boss was still controlling the robot in his own designated driver's seat but was getting irritated at the fact that they were losing.

Gr...

The Bandit Boss turned on his walkie-talkie to hear from the others outside.

What's taking you idiots so long?!
We brought the dang robot to scare them into submission!

Why are they not giving up yet?!

Sorry sir but they have a support unit called... Sharps backing them up!
It seems to be an ancient robot of sorts.

An ancient robot?
Can’t you just turn it into scrap already?!

That’s the problem, sir J.
This thing’s a total beast!
We can’t even make a dent on it!

Grr... FINE!
If it all goes to trash, let me know.

Of course.

The Bandit Boss turned off his walkie talkie and looked at the fight down below. If worst came to shove, he would be punishing this entire town with his wrath!

Gentlemen, now!
Attack the robot from all sides!
(Eekkkk, can’t wait to get my prize at the end of all this!)

The bandits split up to destroy the bot once and for all. The soldiers noticed what they were planning and decided to round together in a

circle format while Sharps stayed in front of them with a determined face.

Robot man!
I know you are all powerful but this is gonna be difficult to manage, even for you!

[I’m willing to take the chance.]

Alright, your call mate!

The bandits started attacking the group with laser guns, chains, boomerangs, what have you! Sharps purposefully took the bandits’ attention away from the soldiers to get them a breathing room. He used his jet boosters to land on the nearby roof and started blasting lasers with his hand. The bandits noticed this and tried getting on his level. Unfortunately for them however, when they arrived at the roof, they were met with a sword slice to the throat.

One of the soldiers noticed someone sneaking behind Sharps and tried to warn him. But Sharps didn’t notice so the soldier blasted at the person about to attack Sharps. But because of a faulty targeting, the blast hit Sharps on the chest instead. The soldier covered his mouth in horror.

Sharps looked underneath and saw the soldier trying to apologize to him. The soldier braced himself for the robot to turn against them but instead, Sharps gave him a thumbs up while holding his exposed chest. Regardless of the battle damage, Sharps knew these people weren’t going to be saved themselves.

Back with Leco; she didn’t understand what she was looking at. It

was a figure she didn’t know about, smiling alongside Sharps... no, it wasn’t Sharps. This man looked different to Sharps, despite having a similar attire to him. She looked around all confused. Could it be... no, she didn’t believe it. She had to know more first.

She checked under the table to see if there was anything else she missed. After a bit of tinkering around, she found a dusty old tape under the table. She knew this would answer her questions once and for all. It just had to!
She picked out the tape player from inside her bag and connected it to the nearby TV monitor. She hit play and watched what had been recorded.

Hello? Is this thing recording?

There was audible chuckling from behind the camera.

Oh, come on, Bushra!
This is serious.

“Sorry, sorry man! Go on.”

* clears his throat *
Anyways... hello there!
My name is Sarpo Fields, the once leader of MPC2 and the husband of Cloe Fields.
I’m recording this tape now for our future successors to watch.
* smiles *
If you are watching this tape, I want you to know that... you are not alone!
Even if we all perish someday, there will be people who keep on fighting for the greater good!
Never forget that!

Woah...

Hood always talks about leaving a legacy behind her but what she FAILS to realize is that... being feared is not a legacy worth leaving.
A legacy is when you inspire others to follow in your footsteps!
A legacy is when a person makes good in someone's life!
And most importantly... a legacy is the memories you share along the way.
* tries to hold onto his robotic arm *
My days... may be limited but I will be happy to know that I will be remembered by my friends and family for years to come.
* points at the screen *
And YOU should do the same.
Make memories and stay on the side of good.
* coughs more loudly this time *
Ugh... please, keep up the fight we have started.
Sarpo Fields, out.

And so, the tape ended. Leco didn't know what she just watched. It was... not Sharps, that's for sure. "Sarpo"? Was this person the actual legend Fields? If so... who was she hanging out with?

Leco desperately looked under the table again to see if there was ANY sort of continuation of this tape... but there was none. The other tapes were too corrupted for their own good to be salvaged. So, all she had left... was this tape only.

She took a deep breath and lied down on the ground. She knew she had to be calm and collected to make sense of any of this. She sat down in a split position and looked back at the guy on the tape again. Yup, that wasn't Sharps at all. That means the robot she was hanging out with... was just a replica. Was it a robotic clone, was it just him but turned fully cyborg, she didn't know. All she knew was that Sharps was still her friend, no matter what.

Even if that robot wasn't the legendary Fields... she didn't care. He was still her friend and after everything they had been through, she wasn't just going to turn on him. She wasn't worried about that part. She was worried about how he might react to it...

Suddenly, she felt the building shaking just like last time. She knew her time here was limited. She picked up the tape as well as all her items and got out of the building as soon as possible. Even though Sarpo's legacy crumbled right in front of her, Leco promised to herself that she would never forget about it.

Meanwhile; Sharps was still fighting against the horde of Hooded Bandits alongside the soldiers of the town. They could deal with the Hooded Bandits just fine but the giant robot was like a bandit spawner. There were new bandits jumping out of it left and right! Sharps knew he had to deal with it somehow.

Robot man!
We will cover for you while you go destroy that big robot!

Sharps tilted his head to the side in worry.

Don't worry, we can take care of ourselves!
* hits a Hooded Bandit with his shoulder *
Just do it fast and steady!

Sharps nodded and readied his jet boosters for an explosive attack.

Sir J, sir J!

The Boss Bandit responded to the walkie-talkie with a frustrated look on his face.

WHAT?!

T-They are defeating all of our men!
Soon, we won't have any left!

Grrr... FINE!
* looks at the controller *
PLAN B!

Plan B?
Since when did we have a plan-

The bandit watched in horror as her walkie-talkie disconnected on its own. She tried running away but she was cornered by the soldiers.

Talk lady! Talk!
What's your boss planning?!

I-I don't know!

Don't lie to me, you little-

Before the soldier could finish his sentence, he noticed the horse robot's eyes glowing red as it was charging up a blast to destroy the whole town.

What is that mad man doing?!

He is going to destroy this entire town with us still on it!

If I can’t have this town...
* laughs maniacly *
No one will!

Sharps knew he had to act fast. He needed more charge time to fully destroy this thing with a single blow but there wasn’t enough time! Sharps looked at the helpless people below and then decided what needed to be done. He had to overclock his systems to speed up the process, even if it meant he would get destroyed in the process. He started overclocking his systems and blasted off towards the robot.

And then, it was silent. The entire town was filled with dust, almost acting like a fog.

Sharps looked around him, expecting to see his destroyed body in the ground, only to realize that he was floating above the sky inside a red bubble. He tried touching the bubble but he couldn’t feel anything when he did so. He was confused about what was going on until he heard a voice in his head, saying “Leave it up to me.”

The Boss Bandit didn’t understand why the town was filled with smoke all of a sudden. Suddenly, he felt a strong force of power destroying his beloved robot piece by piece.

W-What is going on?!
* looks around *
Who is doing this?!

He tried using the laser but it was no longer functioning. When the dust started to settle, he saw a floating sorcerer in front of him.

W-What?!

Sorry, can’t let you destroy this little town, my friend.
* raises their hand *
This will hurt just a bit.

Xtress flied towards the robot once again at rapid speeds and sliced it in half. They watched as the Boss Bandit fell to the ground in agony. Xtress chuckled, it has been a while since he last fought one of these world conquring types. They looked above and saw Sharps floating down towards them.

[Show off.]

Ay, there you are, Sharpie.
* smiles *
I was wondering when I was going to save you again.

[Don’t push it.]
[Why are you here?]

Just passing by.
Selling all kinds of stuff to kind folks around the planet.
And of course, helping people in need.

[...]

Seems like I caught you in a bit of a pickle, eh?

[Yes.]
[...thank you for the help.]

Of course, my good pal Sharpie.
* stretches their back *
Gotta say though, I don’t fight giant robots like these every day.

[Noted.]

Now.
* puts their hands together *
I will change their memories so that they will think you saved em, ‘kay?

[Is that really necessary?]

Probably not but it’s fun.

Sharps watched as Xtress casted a spell onto the air. It was a beatiful sight to behold with a bunch of red particles spinning in the air.

There we go.
* smiles *
I will be sure to NOT save you from doing one of your “heroic sacrifices” next time around, deal?

[...deal.]

Cool.
Welp, see you on the next one then, Sharpie!
* grins *
I’m happy to see that you are still redeeming yourself!
* does a peace sign *
Ciao!

And in a flash, the smoke around the town disappeared as everyone looked at each other with confused looks on their faces. That usally happens after one of Xtress’ schemes, Sharps thought to himself. He looked around and saw the Boss Bandit running away from the scene screaming.

I don’t know what happened but you will pay for what you did, you hunk of junk!
I will build an even badder robot to destroy you!
Just mark my words!

Sharps watched from above as the townsfolk cheered on for him. He slowly floated down and gave everyone a thumbs up. They were calling him the legendary hero Fields and started giving him rewards, none of which he really wanted. He was on his way to rescue his friend. The townsfolk all followed behind him until they reached the sand pit.

What is it, legendary hero Fields?

Sharps pointed at the pit.

[My friend is trapped down there.]
[Help me rescue her... please.]

And so, the townsfolk all grabbed their shovels to help rescue Sharps' one and only friend.

A few hours went by as they were finally able to rescue the unconscious Leco. Sharps asked the townsfolk if they could stay for the night for Leco's recovery and they accepted. Sharps stood right next to Leco for the night, resting his servos and thinking of what had happened today. He wondered if Leco was able to find anything underground but that was a question for tomorrow.

The very next day;

Ugh...
* looks around *
Sharps?

Sharps looked at his friend in happiness.

Did you... rescue me?

Sharps nodded and pointed at all the president the townsfolk left for the two of them. She smiled and took a breath in relief. Sharps was still his one and only friend, regardless of the mysterious behind his

origin. Sharps helped her stand up as they were greeted by the ever so curious townsfolk.

Yay, the cat lady is alive!

Sssh, don’t say that Jimmy!

* coughs *
We appreciate everything you have done for us, folks.
Unfortunately... we would rather have some lone time.
Isn’t that so, Sharps?

Sharps gave her a thumbs up in response. He wanted some breathing room as well. The crowd was dissapointed but also understanding. These high-class heroes needed their own share of breaks too, of course.

Before the duo could head out, they were greeted by the town mayor once again.

Oh, thank goodness you are okay, Leco!
We were worried sick.

...thank you.
Sorry for... my behavior earlier.

It’s all okay, lads.

We are just happy you are doing alright.

* chuckles *
You guys never changed, huh?

Before the mayor responded back, Leco looked at the sky above and thought of something.

Sorry to interrupt, chief but we better get going now.
We won’t be able to make it home at a timely fashion otherwise.

Oh, of course, of course.
Do go ahead... I just wanted to tell you something before you two left.

That is?

You are always welcome to come back anytime you want.
This is not an invitation but rather, an option.

I will... consider it.
* puts her hands on her pockets *
Thanks.

Well then...
Farewell, heroes!

And so, the two friends were on their way to their home. As Leco suspected, they were able to make home just as the sun was about to fall. As much as Leco was grateful for everything Sharps has done for her... she still felt a bit unease, not telling Sharps about what she has found. So, before the two entered their home, Leco wanted to get it over with.

Hey, Sharps.

Sharps looked at Leco with a confused look. She sounded... sad.

[What's wrong?]

I... need to tell you what I found under all of that rubble.

Sharps nodded slowly. He didn't want to be worried but from the tone of Leco's voice, it was hard not to. Sharps entered their house and saw Leco setting up the TV monitor, just like usual. But unlike all those other times, Leco had an uncertain look on her face. As she put the tape on the tape player and pressed play, the corrupted data inside Sharps' memory chip got recovered.

His reality shattered in front of his eyes. He remembered some of his past life now... but at what cost?

He saw an insane maniac in a queen attire booting him up for the very first time.

That should be it...
AHA! There he is!
Mr. Fields, meet Unit SRP!
My ultimate creation to destroy all your friends for good!

Remembered his rivalry with an annoying co-lead.

Hey, you hunk of junk!
* points at the chocolate *
You gonna eat that?
…
Oh, buzz off!
I know you can’t eat that thing anyways.
* crosses his arms *
Whatever, just get ready for the mission.
We are leaving in a few hours.

Fighting against the supposed heroes of the past.

I don’t know what your deal is, metallic Sarpo but you are going down today!

Not if I have anything to say about it, Tender pumpkin.
* chuckles *
First one to tackle him gets all!

Being beaten up by a Traveler and thrown aside like trash.

EEK! HELP ME!

[SYSTEM ERROR] [SYSTEM ERROR]
[CORRUPTED FOOTAGE]

Let her go, you beast!

And of course... the final nail in the coffin. An attempt to conquer planet.

You take care of his... srp-lings!
I will take care of the big bad robot!

Okay!
* goes into their battle stance *
Be quick!

Alright, Array... you can do this...
* readies his gauntlet for a powerful hit *
Take... THIS!

And with that, he was back at the present. Leco was looking at him with a worried expression, trying to fix his systems from overflowing. She sighed in relief and smiled at Sharps. But surprising her, Sharps stood up and headed to the exit without saying a single word.

H-Hey!
Where are you going, Sharps?!

Sharps tried boosting off to the unknown but his chest cavity was still damaged from the fight yesterday. So instead, he dropped to the

ground with nothing to do. Leco rushed in outside to help him but he refused her help.

I-I’m sorry, alright?!
I just... thought you should know about this as well!

[Why...]

Hm?

[Why are you still trying to help me after you found out about this?]

Leco sighed and sat next to him, under the night stars.

Because... you are my friend.

[You don’t know anything about me.]
[I... didn’t know anything about my past atrocities, either.]

Sharps...

[I was a robot designed by a mad woman to destroy my human self’s friends and family.]
[I was lucky to be stopped back then.]
[I don’t want to ruin this planet again.]

Leco smiled back at him with tears in her eyes. She put her head on his robotic shoulder.

[What are you-]

Does it really matter what you were built for?

[...]

Of course not! You might not be the legendary hero Fields or a helper robot from the past!
* stands up *
But do you wanna know what you are?

Sharps tilted his head.

You are my friend.
And nothing will change that.

Sharps didn’t know how to respond. Even after everything... Leco still wanted to be his friend. He looked back at his memory banks but instead of the now recovered old data, he decided to look at his recent memories.

Inside Cave Inertia, 5 months ago, he saw a curious Leco finding him in that dark cave. He was nothing but a head and torso at the time.

What on Earth..?
* takes a step forward *
What is this thing? An ancient bot?

She tinkered with his wirings and after a bit, managed to activate his coding. He suddenly activated, causing her to take a few steps back.

Uhm...
* raises her hand *
G-Greetings, ancient robot!
Who are you?

[UNIT SR... S-SHARPS!]

Sharps?
That’s... a fascinating name.
* looks at his wirings some more *
Hm... this won’t do.
We might need to go back to my home to fix you up.

She took his remaining parts and put them on her backpack.

Don’t worry, okay?
* smiles *
I will get you fixed up when we get home.

“That’s a promise.”

And just like that, all memories Sharps had with Leco popped up in his mind. She fixed him up and took care of him when he was just a mindless monster for the people of the past. The two played board games, took care of little critters and had so much more fun times together.

Sharps turned his head and looked at the present Leco with a saddened look on his non-expressive face.

[I’m sorry, Leco.]

No need, Sharps.

[...thank you.]

Sharps noticed Leco reaching out her hand and got up thanks to her.

I will get you fixed up in no time and then we can go on even more adventuring!
* twirls her tail *
How does that sound?

[I would love that.]

And so, Sharps was finally at peace with himself. After months of trying to discover his purpose in life... little did he realize that the simple solution was the right one all along.

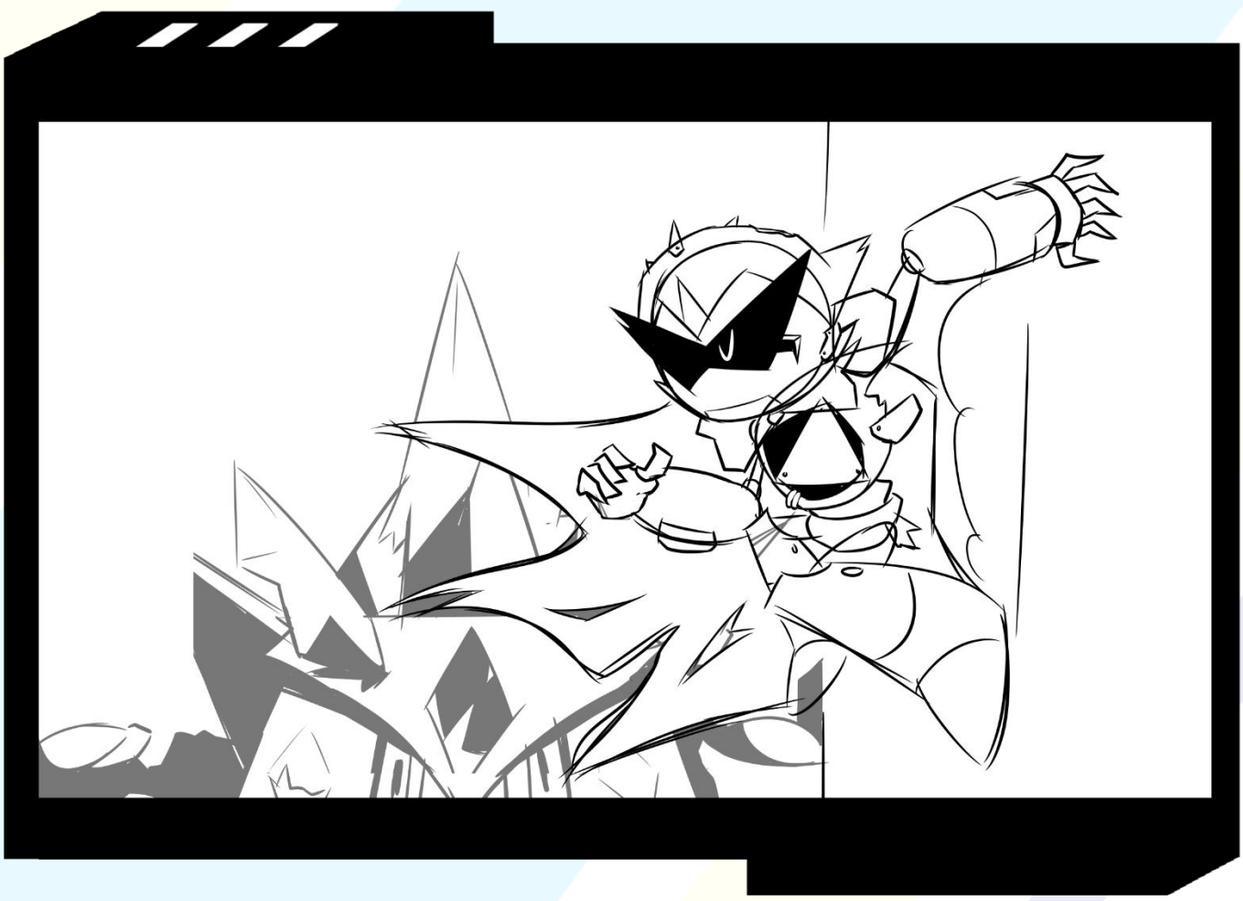
It didn’t matter.

His name was Unit SRP and he was created to destroy the heroes of the past... but now, he didn’t have to be what his creator invisioned him as.

His name was now Sharps, the robot of the past, fighting for the greater good alongside his best friend Leco. And he would continue to be so until the day he would be decommissioned.

The choices of the past didn’t matter. All it mattered was the choices he made in the present.

THE END



JENNIFER STILLS

Jennifer Stills is a news reporter who also has a secondary job of being a spectator for exciting events happening on Diamond City. She is VERY into her job... almost a little too much.

She’s a brash but also a loving lady who wants to find her special someone someday. Despite her personality, she still hopes to one day be able to help MPC2’s cause for a brighter future.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@Sonic32Super

MARIGOLD THE WICKED

Marigold the Wicked was once a young girl trapped inside a pocket zone, unable to escape for years. During the time she spent in there, she mastered the dark arts, making her a very powerful opponent to contest. She can create cards with different attributes as well as shapeshift.

She finally managed to escape from the Pocket Dimension after her encounter with the Rascals.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@sohekun

HATTIE FOLIO

Hattie Folio is one of the two older brothers of Joyce. He and his brother Don are both scientists and they successfully kickstarted their business branch called “Super Folio Bros.” in Diamond City. They specialize in making strength/healing potions.

He loves reading books and wants to have a catchphrase of his own (which he fails at)

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@sohekun

DON FOLIO

Don Folio is one of the two older brothers of Joyce. He and his brother Hattie are both scientists and they successfully kickstarted their business branch called “Super Folio Bros.” in Diamond City. They both have a strict “not making harmful potions” policy that they swore by to this day.

He is a lot more emotionally attached to his little sister compared to Hattie.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@sohekun

LORELAI MACMILLAN

Lorelai MacMillan is a progidy mastermind turned bounty hunter. She is the child of the two most wealthy Perdians to have ever lived. She is the leader of the Turned Eye Society, a group of Perdians who don't want to deal with the conflicts between both sides. She uses the remains of her parents' mansion as a base of operations for her supporters. She goes bounty hunting just for the thrills of it. She has a fear of irrelevancy.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@Sonic32Super

VIKTOR PAGE

Viktor Page is an incredibly smart assassian for hire. Growing up alone in the forests of Perdiah, he found work doing odd jobs for farmers. And as he got older, he got into an assassian guild where he met his now master and best friend, Lorelai.

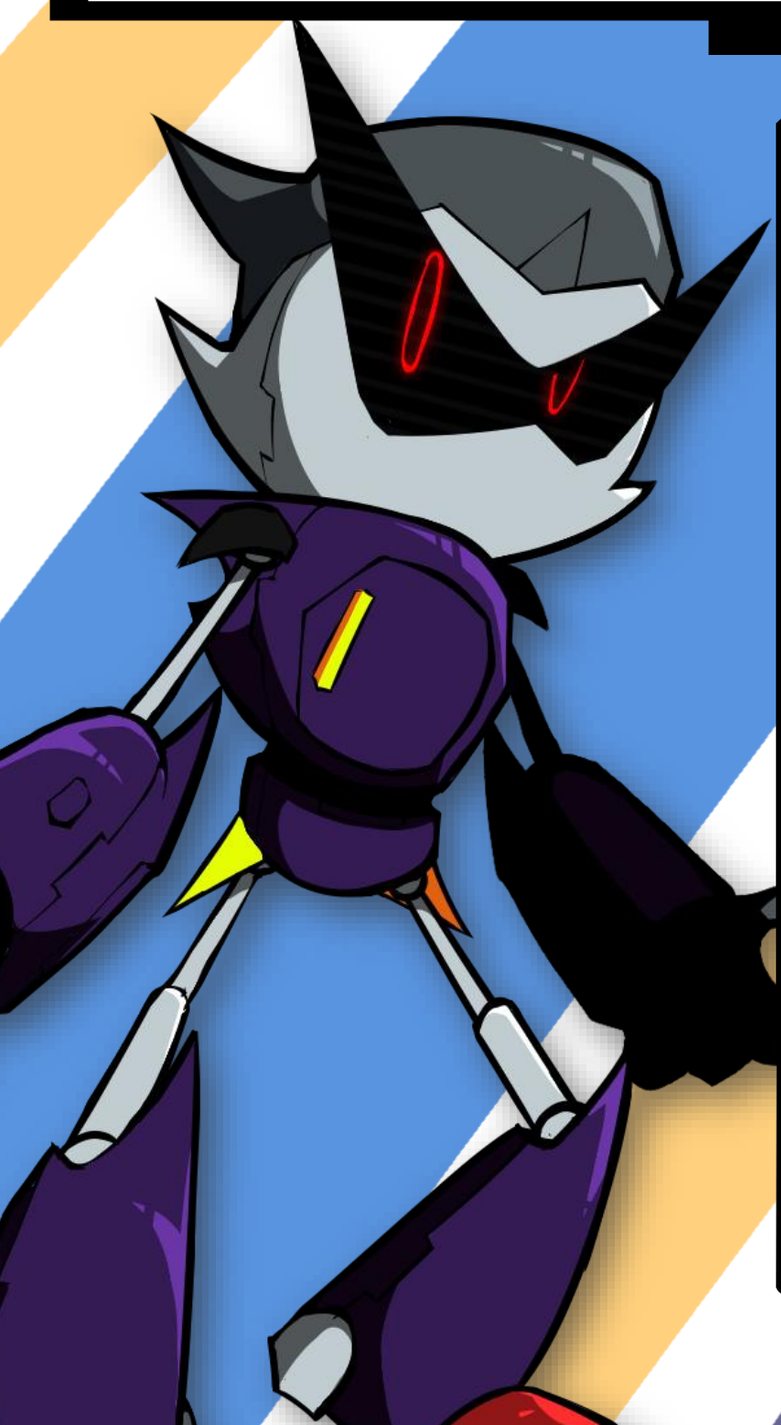
He exclusively talks to Lorelai as he despises society as a whole.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@Midasthegoldguyidk1

UNIT-SRP

UNIT-SRP is Maizie's ultimate creation! He is a robotic replica of Sarpo Fields, borrowing most of his skillset. He is powered by a red ring stored in his chest cavity. He inherits some characteristics from his organic counterpart.

He is focused on accomplishing his objective and nothing more. He hates "people who try to be quirky".



DESIGN DRAWN BY
@Sonic32Super

MIDORI AKIYAMA

Midori Akiyama is a really skilled soldier in MPC2's ranks. She accomplishes just about anything if she puts her mind to it. With a bit of luck, she entered the ranks of MPC2 during the Crystal Crisis. She hopes to find her mother whom she lost as a youngin. Will she accomplish her goal and find her mother? Or will she have to face with the dark reality?

She prefers keeping conversations brief and usually has an expressionless face.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
@Vidd03k

HENNA HAWK

Henna Hawk is the daughter of Cornelius Hawk. She took charge of her father's old tribe, The Riskin Tribe, when he retired from the position as leader due to his age. She was best friends with Cloe Meow before the exchange program. She uses daggers with bells attached to them for combat.

She keeps up the facade of being serious but shes silly deep down. She adores girl talk too.

DESIGN DRAWN BY
*@fexarii_*

MORE WORLDBUILDING!

Here we are again! With Arc 3 now wrapped up, I managed to recontextualize a lot of the concepts introduced in Arc 1 and 2 alongside introducing new stuff. Get your popcorns ready because this is gonna be a long one.

The mysterious door from Chapter 5 got an explanation in this arc! Originally an Undertale reference, now it's something completely original in the context of TE:R's canon. The door leads to "The Pocket Dimension", a mystical hub area that leads to a bunch of "pocket zones". The pocket zone who got the most attention was obviously the swamp one, the one where Marigold was trapped in.

Even though it's the pocket zone we spend the most time in, there are a lot more pocket zones beyond the surface. Not to mention all the other people who travelled through these zones like "S. Carlos". However, Joyce unintentionally corrupted the Pocket Dimension during her escape attempts so who knows how this is all going to play out...

RETURNING LOCATIONS

With The Chaos Detour having the characters revisit old locations from the previous arcs, the ones I picked were Town Bloom, Town Downer and Village Low. While all of them were covered in crystal pillars, there are still some neat additions I added to them.

Town Bloom is the least changed from its original appearance. It was still a resort surronded by flower gardens before the Crystal Kingdom Disaster took place. The ones in charge of the resort business all ran away from the town, leaving the commonfolk to defend for themselves. Thankfully, the trio arrived to save the day! With the past owners now gone, there will be some changes when it comes to the management of the resort going forward.

@midasthegoldguyidk1

Next up is **Town Downer**! This town had a lot more development in the background since the last time we saw it in Arc2. After Maizie sent off Lydia and Terry to their respective locations, Terry took control of the town in a matter of days. What he didn't account for , however, was the possibility of a resistance forming. He ordered his men to look all around the city to find these supposed resistance group while he dealt with all the paper work. Unfortunately for him, the heroes arrived just as the resistance showed their hands.

@sohekun

And finally, **Village Low**! This is Carlos' birth village and we have last seen this place in the flasbacks. Now though, we see what's left of the village. Completely abondened besides Carlos himself. Despite Carlos leaving the village for his research years ago, when he came back he realized that his village was a shell of its former self. Now, he spends the rest of his days, trying to fix his village or as he likes to put it "bringing back the good ol' days". That's why he was in the village all alone. But who knows, maybe his fellow villagers will one day come back or even better, newcomers as well.

@fangnull

MAIZIE'S FATE

Maizie as a character has always fascinated me (despite me creating her). She always felt unpredictable ever since her inception so writing her lose her sanity as time went on and actually killing her off felt... cathartic.

I will geniunely miss her as a character because not only she was a fun villain to write for, she was also... sad. I legitimately felt bad for her at points because of her mental state. Rest in peace, Maizie. Kyle will carry on your story.

VENGEFUL RUBIES

With Arc3 splitting up the main cast, I knew I wanted to have a replacement faction as our main group. So, I came up with “Vengeful Rubies”, a hilariously ironic name Hood came up with for the group. With Hood in the picture, there were a lot of fun character interaction possibilities that I got to write for, until... ya’ know.

The group is a reference to the Knothole Freedom Fighters from SATAM/Archie Sonic, including the tree stump slide being used as the base' entrance. I felt that a crisis of this size needed a more "secure/secret" alternative to MPC2's usual bases. G's old hut being used as some sort of "clear point" was also me wanting to recontextualize another long forgotten story element from Arc1.

THE RISKIN TRIBE

The Riskin Tribe is currently in charge of Henna Hawk after her father Cornelius Hawk retired from the position as leader. It used to be Cloe's old tribe before the exchange program happened and shaped her to be the person she is today. To be completely frank, Henna's whole existence moreso came from the stupid memes around the internet if anything, given how unfortunate Mr. Hawk's name aged. Exploring more of where Cloe came from was always in the plans (especially in Arc4 and onward) but the memes definitely made me more interested in introducing a new Traveler character without the memes defining her.

CHAPTER 40'S ENDING

The ending (moreso the last 2 chapters) was the one thing I was dying to write for ever since I conceptualized Arc3. Not only would Kyle be resurrected after 3 years of real world time since their demise, Hood would be the new antagonist again after so long. I loved the idea of Hood being the type of villain who's true weapon are their words. She singlehandedly manipulated the people of Perdiah to join her side, Traveler or Human. And the thought giddy just thinking about it

In a way, it was a chance for us to go back to the basics. With MPC2 being the underdogs again versus Hood having a big army, it will be like a more refined version of Arc1! It won't be an exact repeat of course, Hood has a new plan up her sleeve for this one. And unlike the old Xtress plan of hers, this will be a rather "permanent" takeover. She will no longer be taking second chances with her plans and I am so excited for you all to see Hood at her full potential very soon.

@sohekun

SCRAPPED IDEAS

This arc had a few more scrapped ideas/concepts compared to last time due to its bigger scope. Here are some of the highlights.

- Marigold, Folio Bros. , UNIT-SRP and Midori weren't part of the original draft that I prepared for the arc. They were added later on alongside their respective stories.
- There was only one cut chapter from this arc. It was going to focus on the crystallized townfolks' perspective and the life inside the Crystal Kingdom. The elements of that chapter were repurposed for Cloe Undercover.
- In the Halloween Tales chapter, Viktor was originally going to have a different role. He was going to be a "zombie king".
- In Chapter 33, Sarpo was originally going to be killed by Maizie, reaffirming Maizie's descend to insanity. The scene was later changed because I thought Sarpo still had a lot of potential as a character so the idea of killing him off was scrapped.

@Vidd03k

- The Rascals were originally going to stay alongside the Vengeful Rubies after they made a truce in Chapter 28. There was a concept for a Murray and Emily chapter but that idea was quickly dropped after Marigold came into the picture.
- Xtress wasn't originally going to possess Maizie at the end of Chapter 38. The rest of the events would happen the same but the heroes would be facing against Maizie herself instead.
- In the original draft, there was a clear lack of attention put into how the regular people of the planet were affected by the Crystal Kingdom Crisis. So, "The Chaos Detour" was conceptualized and was added to the story's ladder chunk. I also came up with Carlos' return, Array and G finally being a couple etc. when the writing process started. Otherwise, these concepts would have been saved for Arc4.
- Adventures #3 was going to be completely different at first. The concept would be Marigold meeting with the Rascals all at once and then playing "games" with them in the swamp dimension. Joyce would try breaking the rules and insult Marigold. This would frustrate Marigold, thus resulting in Mari taking over Joyce's identity.

@Sonic32Super

ART GALLERY/FANART

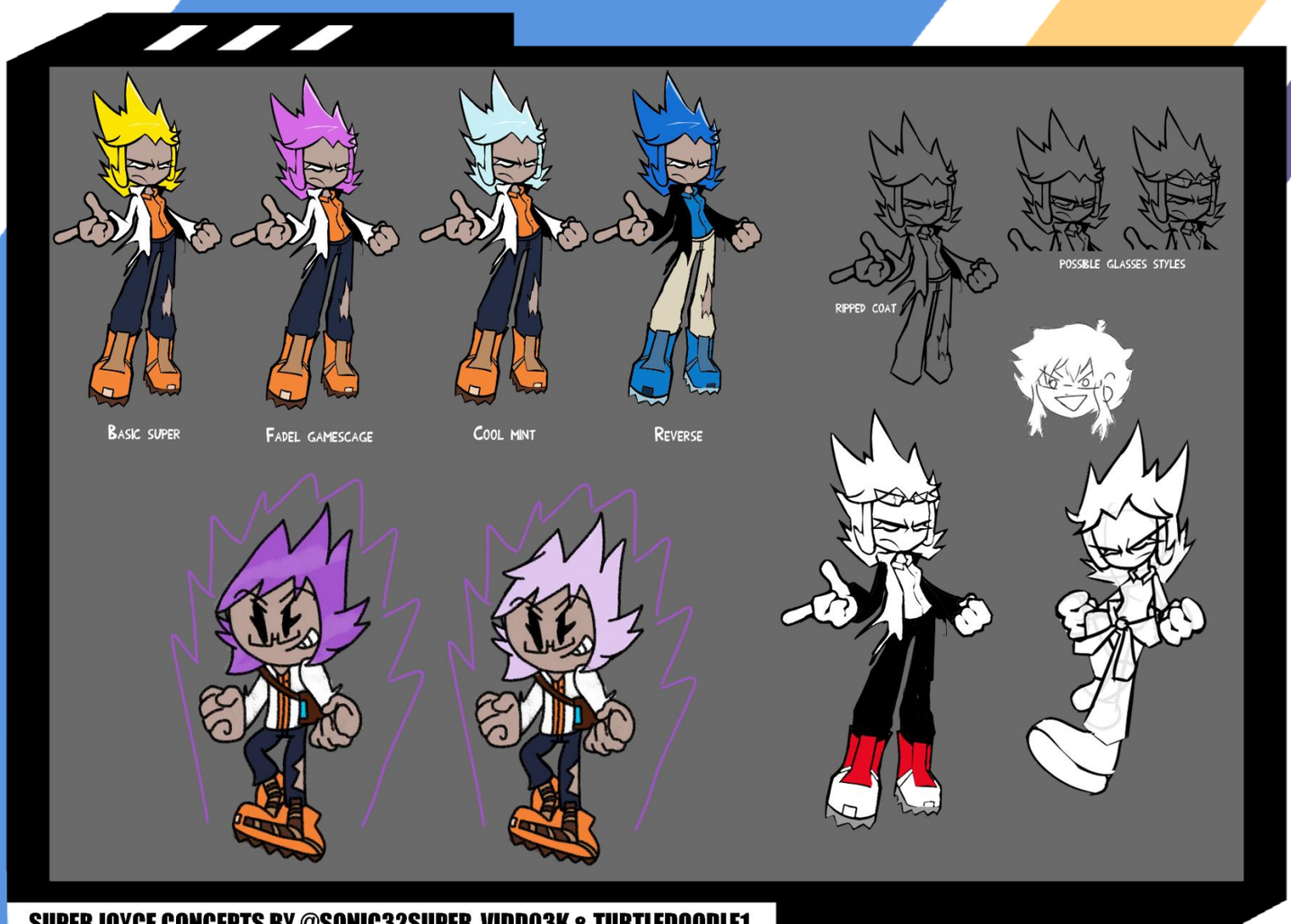
Just like last time, almost all fanart featured on the Blogger pages will also be put here! But first... let's look at the art gallery consisting of official drawings!

MARIGOLD BETA DESIGN BY @SOHEKUN

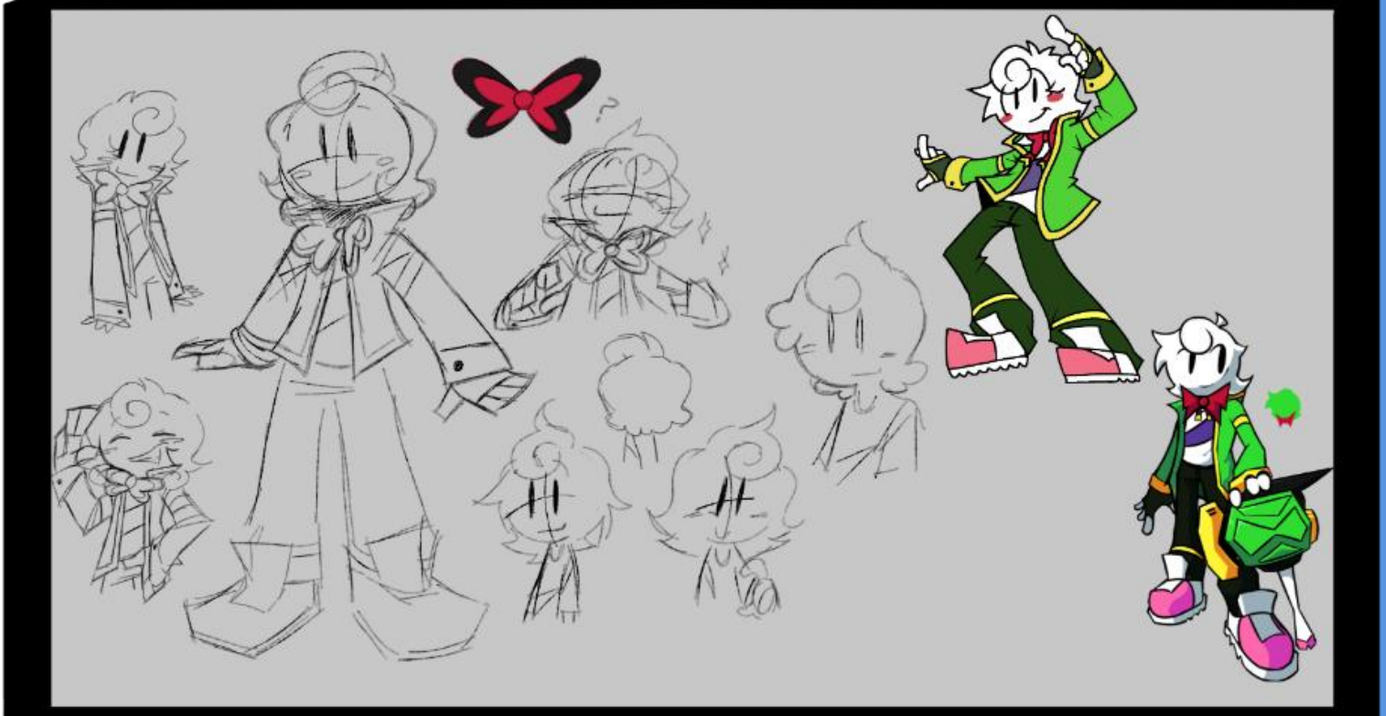
DON BETA DESIGN BY @SOHEKUN

MARIGOLD SHAPESHIFTING ABILITY CONCEPT BY @SOHEKUN

UNIT-SRP ORIGINAL IDEA BY @SONIC32SUPER

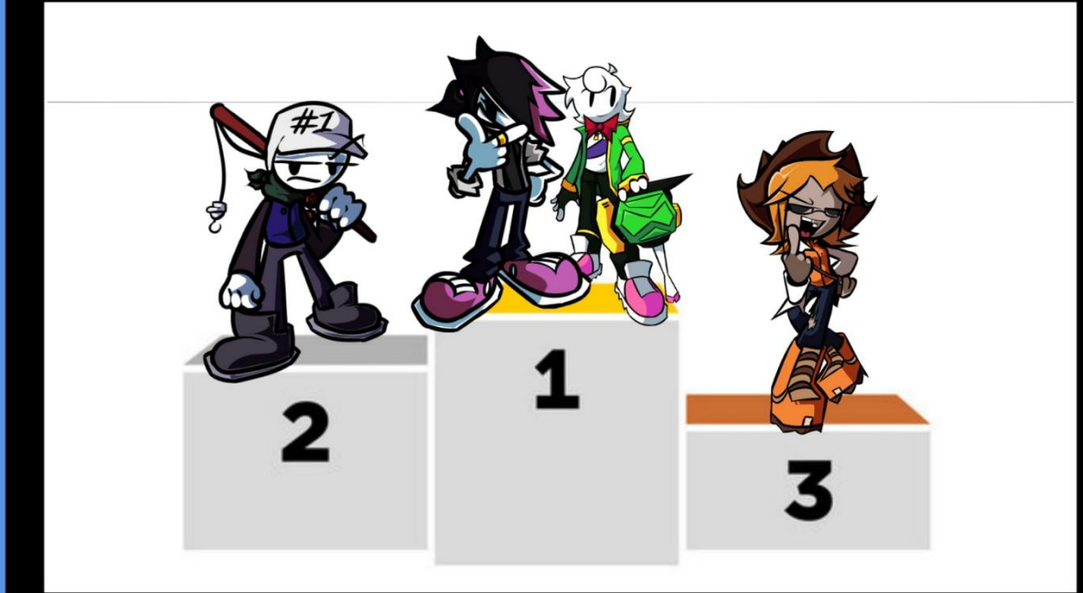


SUPER JOYCE CONCEPTS BY @SONIC32SUPER, VIDDO3K & TURTLEDOODLE1



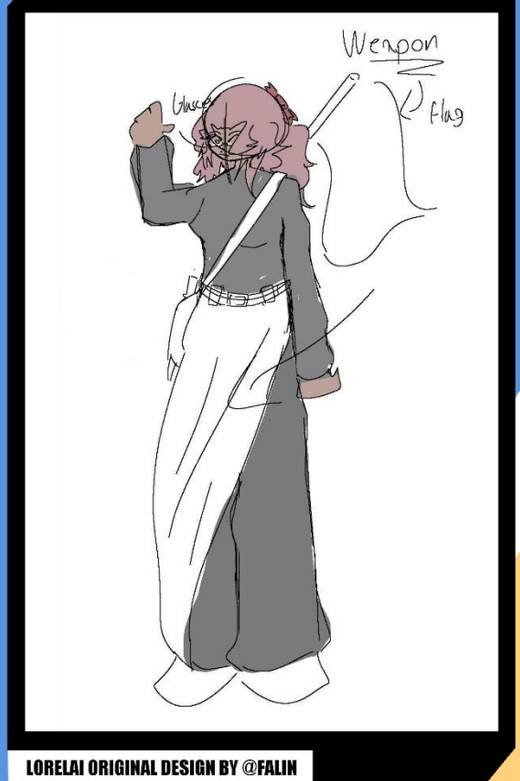
G REDESIGN CONCEPTS BY @SOHEKUN & SONIC32SUPER

G REDESIGN CONCEPTS BY @SOHEKUN



OFFICIAL TE:R CHARACTER POPULARITY RESULTS

CHAPTER 33 PANEL CONCEPT BY @VIDDO3K



LORELAI ORIGINAL DESIGN BY @FALIN

MAIXIE CONCEPTS BY @SUPERSONIC32

TURTLE'S EXPEDITION RESCRIBBLED

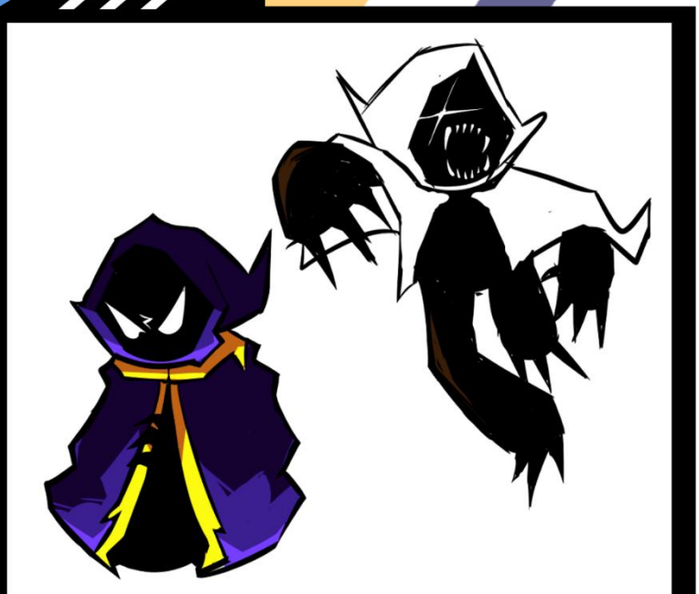
NEW SERIES LOGO BY @FANGNULL

VIKTOR CONCEPTS BY @MIDASTHEGOLDGUYIDK1

HALLOWEEN OUTFITS BY @FALIN (SKETCH) & SONICSUPER32 (COLORING)

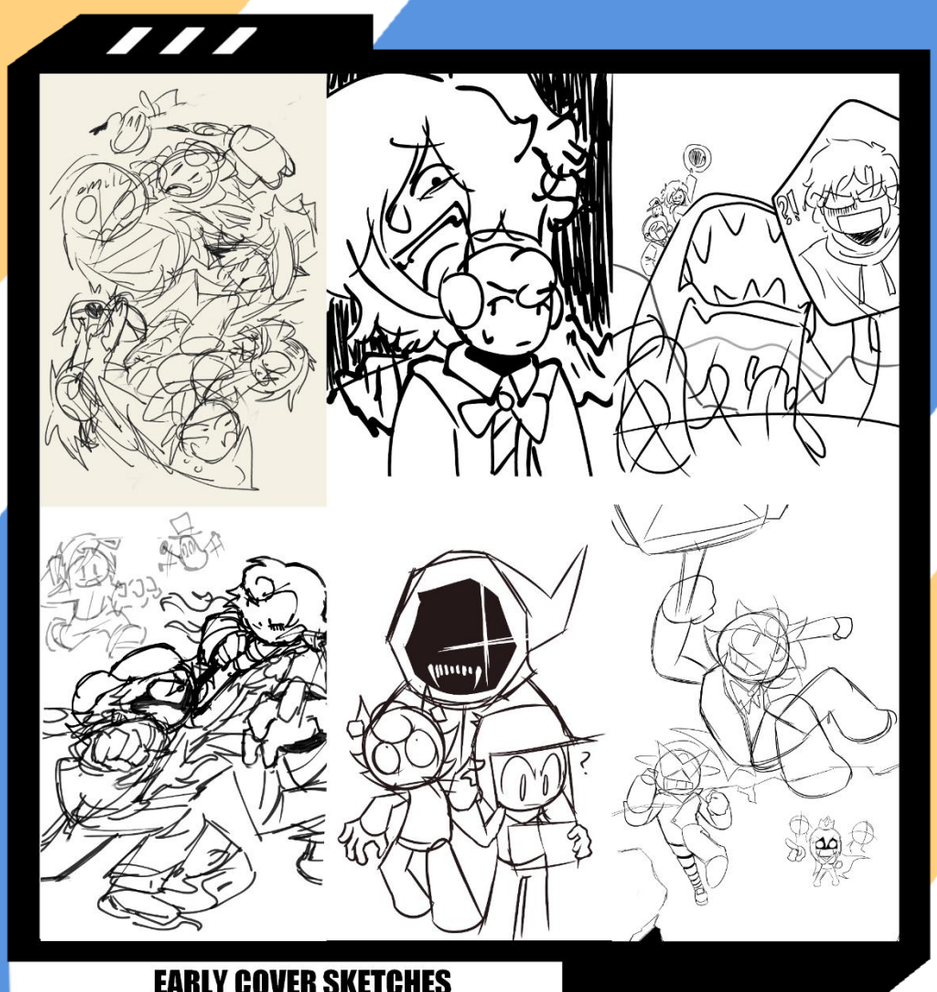
HALLOWEEN OUTFITS BY @SONIC32SUPER

G HAMMER CONCEPTS BY @SONIC32SUPER

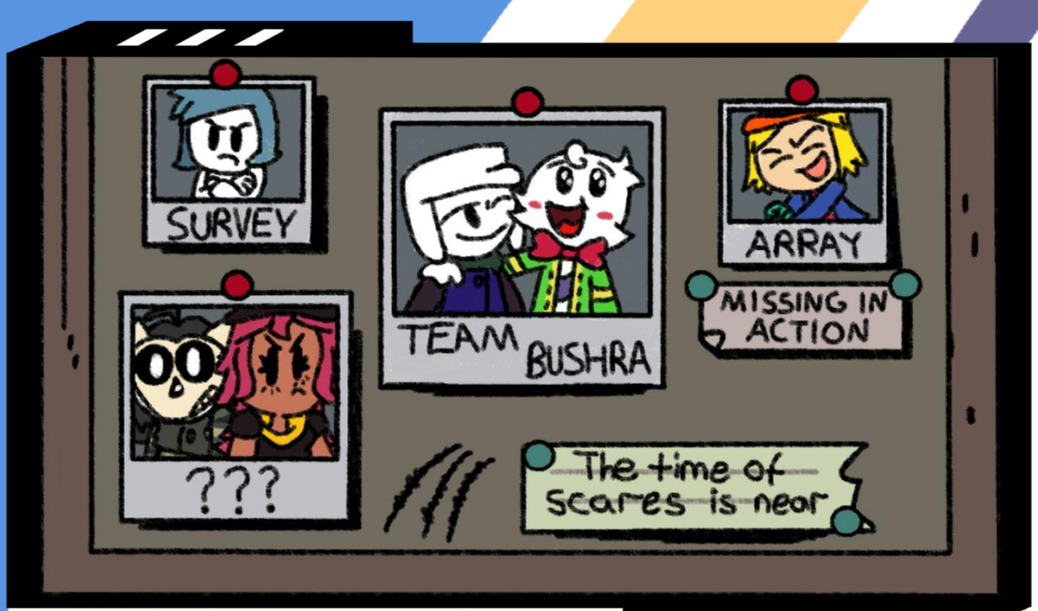


THE JUMPSCARE DESIGN BY @SONIC32SUPER

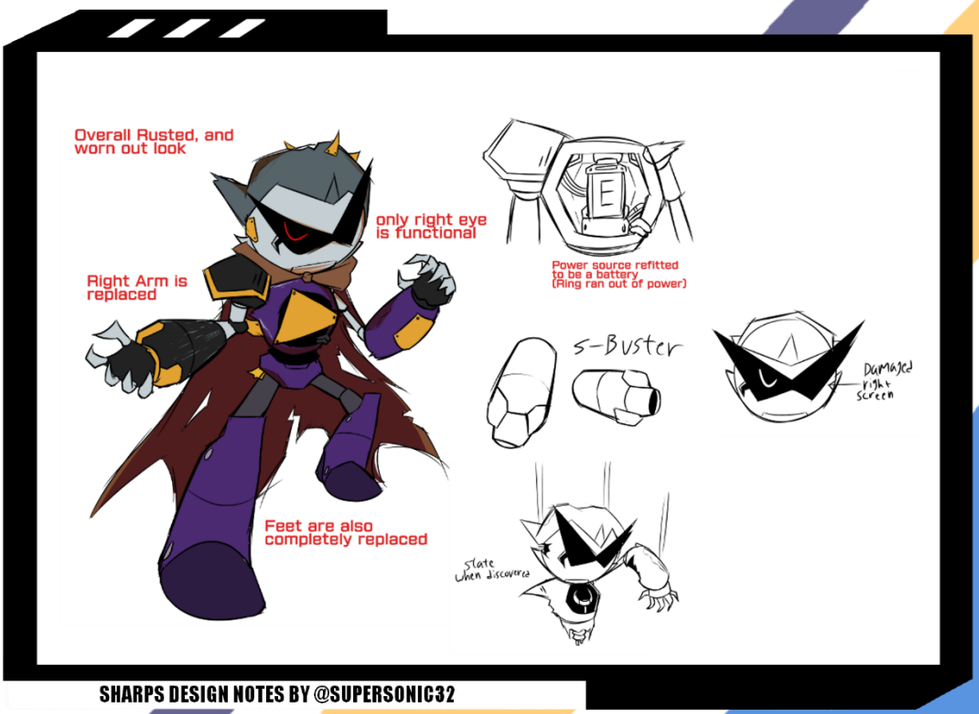
CHAPTER 40 (COVER A) DRAWN BY JELLYENID



EARLY COVER SKETCHES

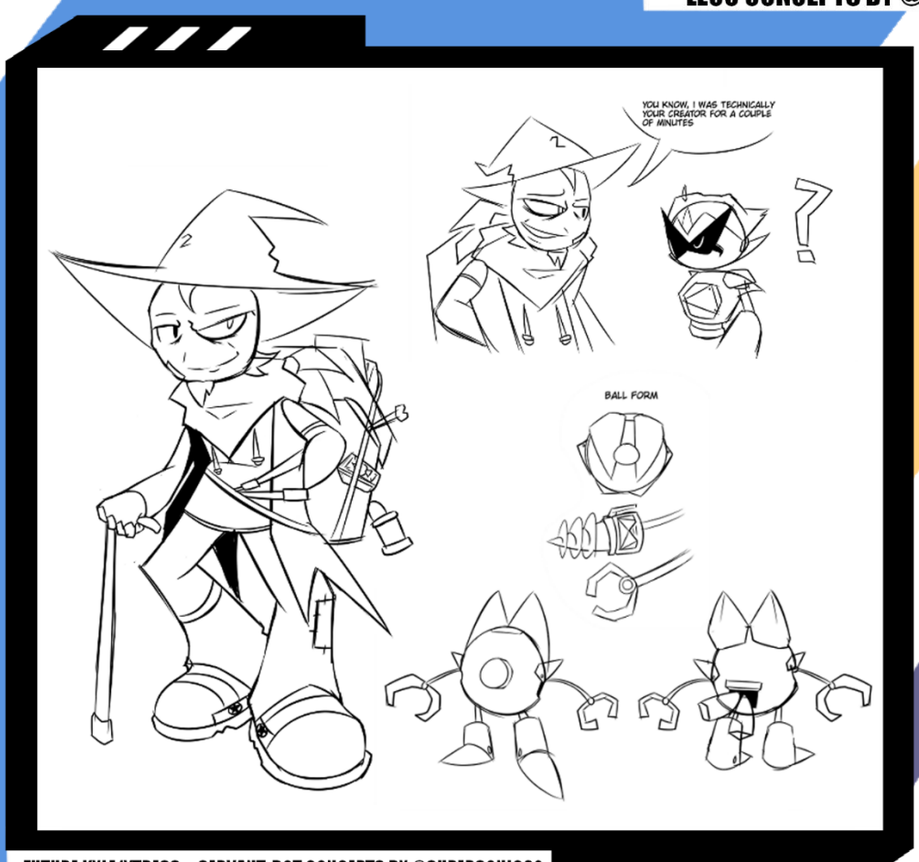


HALLOWEEN CHAPTER TEASER BY @TURTLEDOODLE1


Overall Rusted, and worn out look
only right eye is functional
Right Arm is replaced
Power source refitted to be a battery (Ring ran out of power)
s-Buster
Damaged right screen
Feet are also completely replaced
State when discovered

SHARPS DESIGN NOTES BY @SUPERSONIC32

LECO CONCEPTS BY @SUPERSONIC32



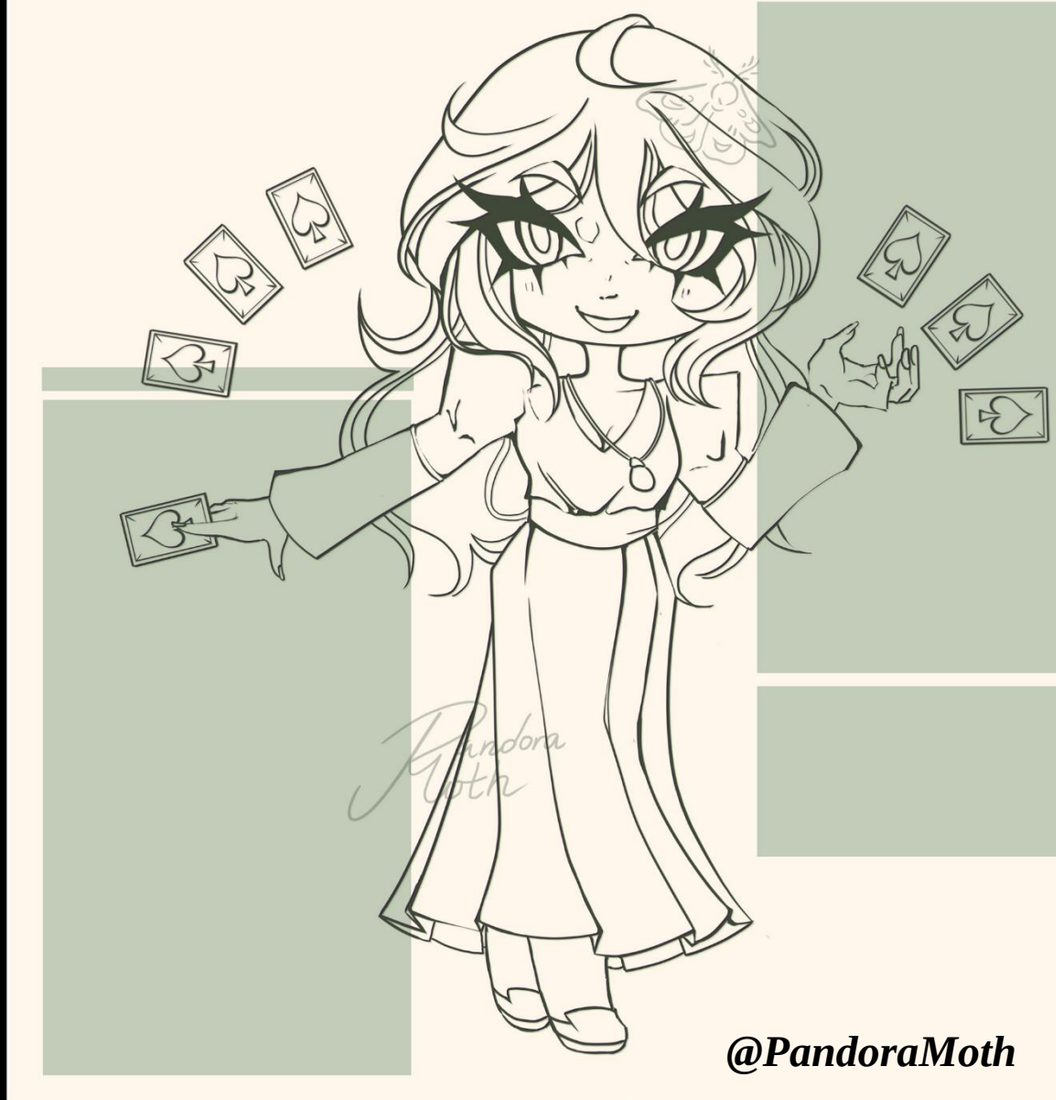
FUTURE KYLE/XTRESS & SERVANT-BOT CONCEPTS BY @SUPERSONIC32

TE:R 2ND ANNIVERSARY DRAWING BY @VIDD03K

TE:R 3RD ANNIVERSARY DRAWING BY @TURTLEDOODLE1

@lapi_nka

@McramoKermit


@PandoraMoth

@Ruubi_Rose

@fangnull

@sohekun
guys... i have some thing i need to confess
(some scary or horrifying secret)
GAY IS OKAY!!
i <3 trans

FALIN
AWAY

@midasthegoldguyidk1
1
YOU JUST DON'T GET IT!!
3
5
sigh~
2
Before I met him I was a nobody greiving & mourning
4
...
6
I get you're upset, I really do. He's a really good guy, we'll get him back G...
7
If not for him
8
I would'nt have them

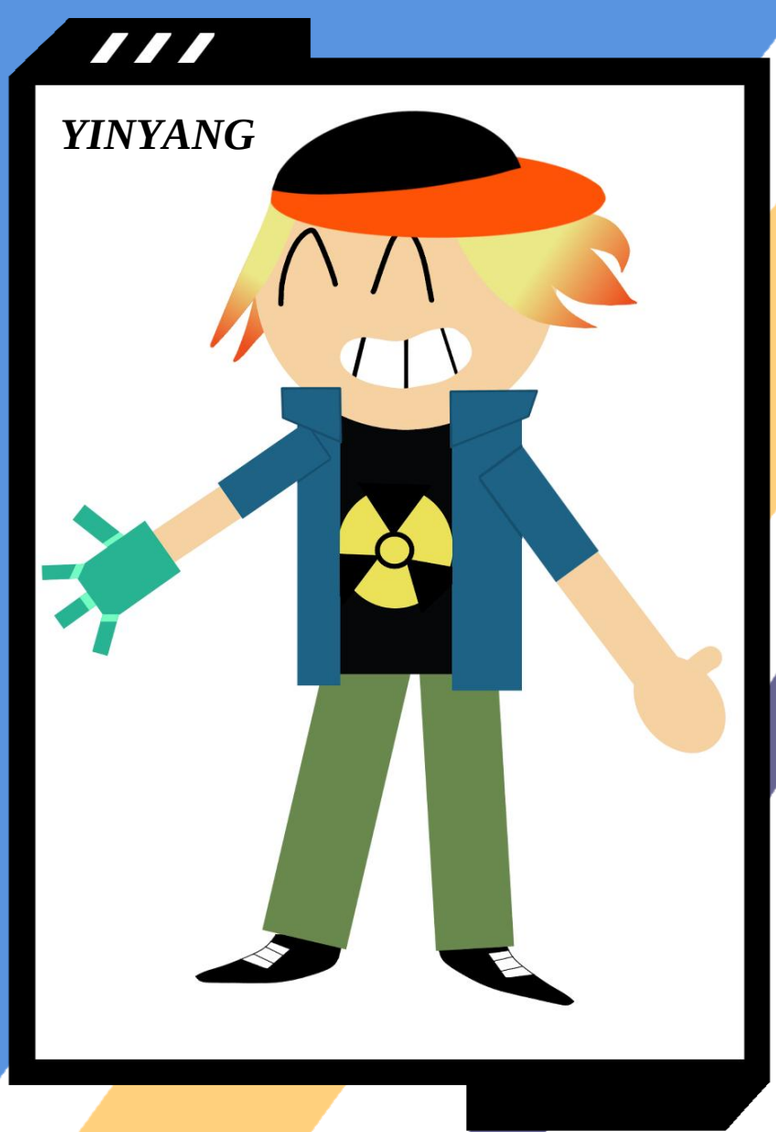
@fangnull
(Sir, Put me down.)
Do i want another knight?

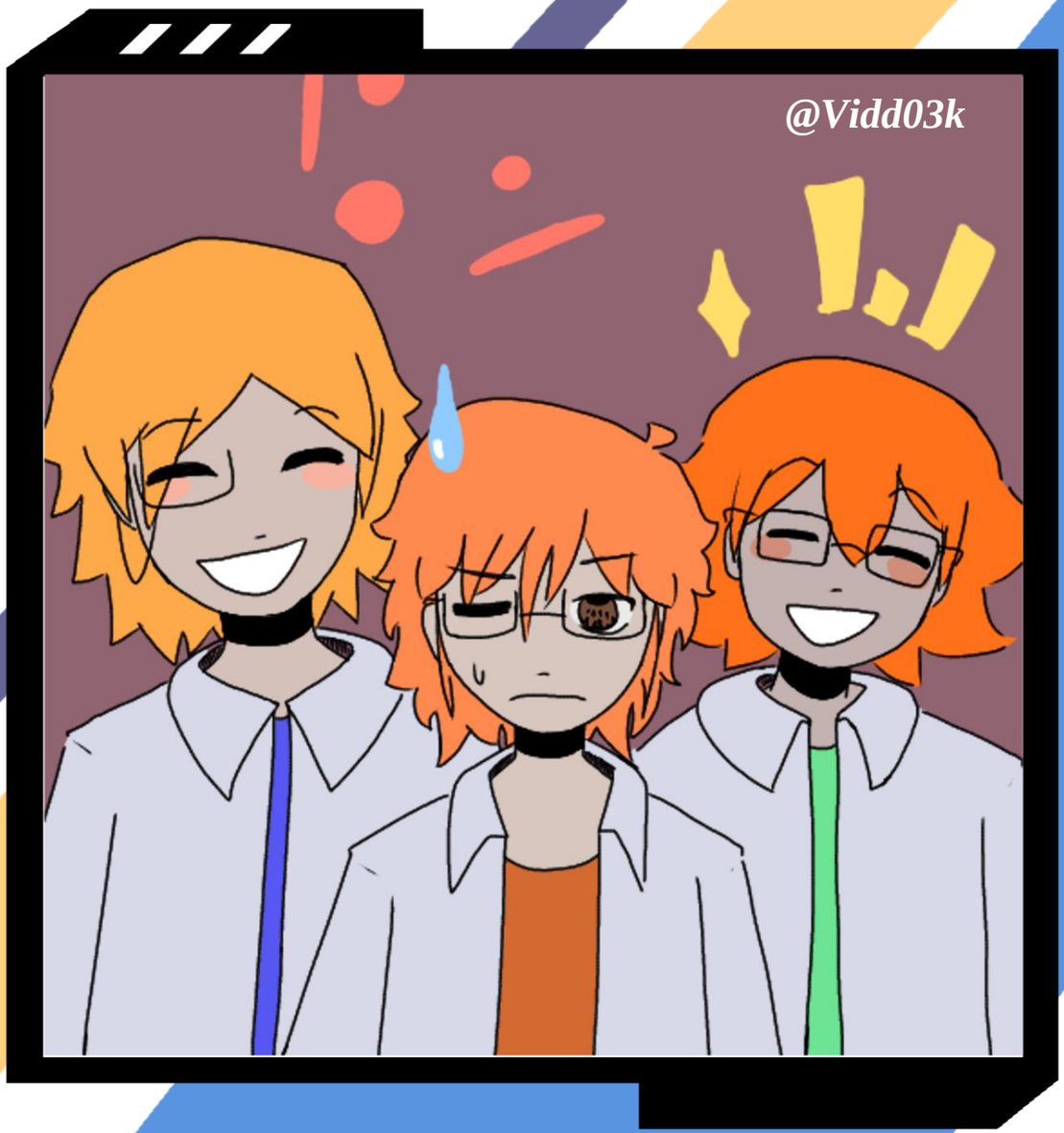
@sohekun
ew, you're nice! stop that
shut up!

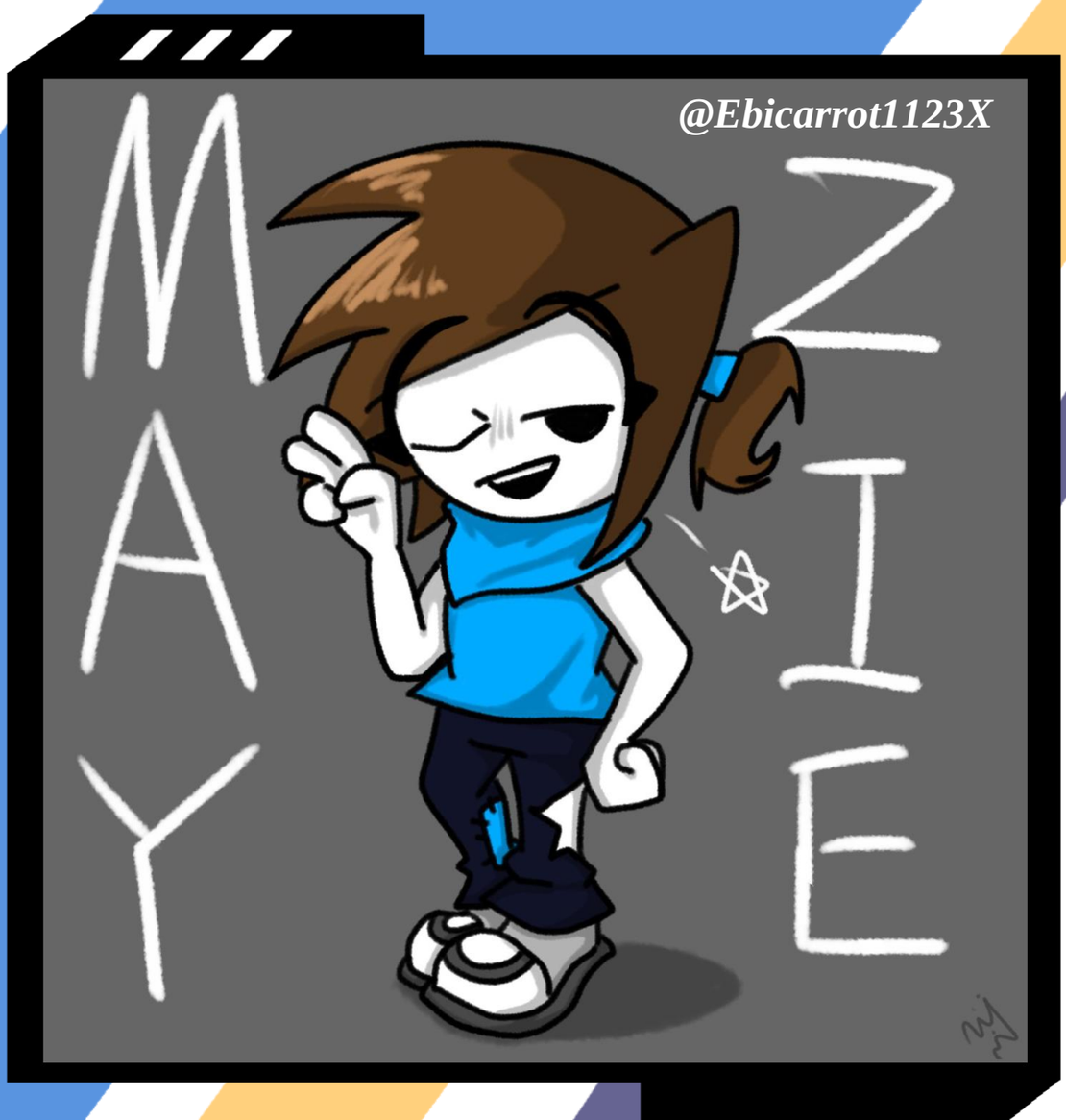
@sohekun
#1
WDYM HOOD IS A GOOD PERSON
why did it miss??
long story? heheh

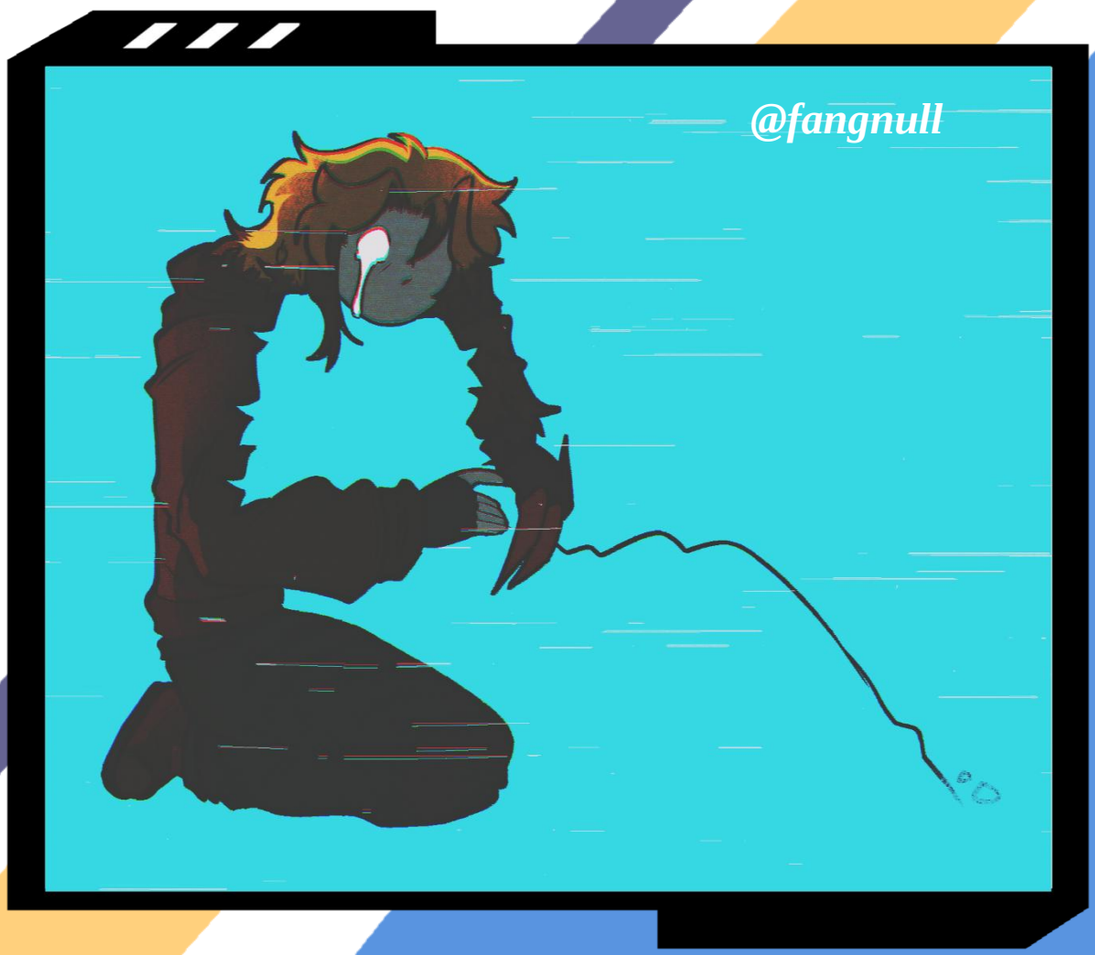
@Vidd03k
BONK!
SIGH...
SORRY...

@Vidd03k
STAND PROUD.
YOU'RE STRONG.
WHAT... IS THIS?


YINYANG

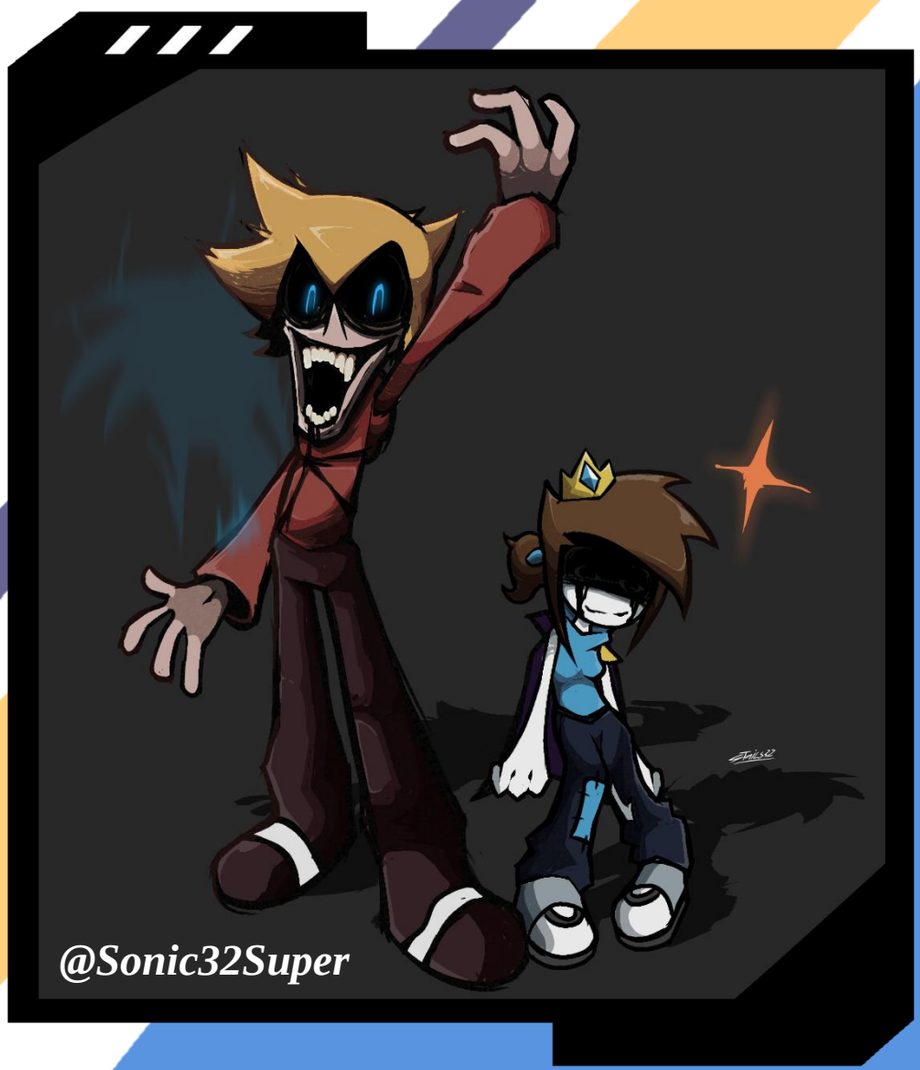

@Vidd03k


@Ebicarrot1123X
MAYZIE


@fangnull

#1
I SEE GREAT POTENTIAL IN YOU, SIR STOKED.
@Vidd03k

@sohekun
hows my lipstick LOL


@Sonic32Super

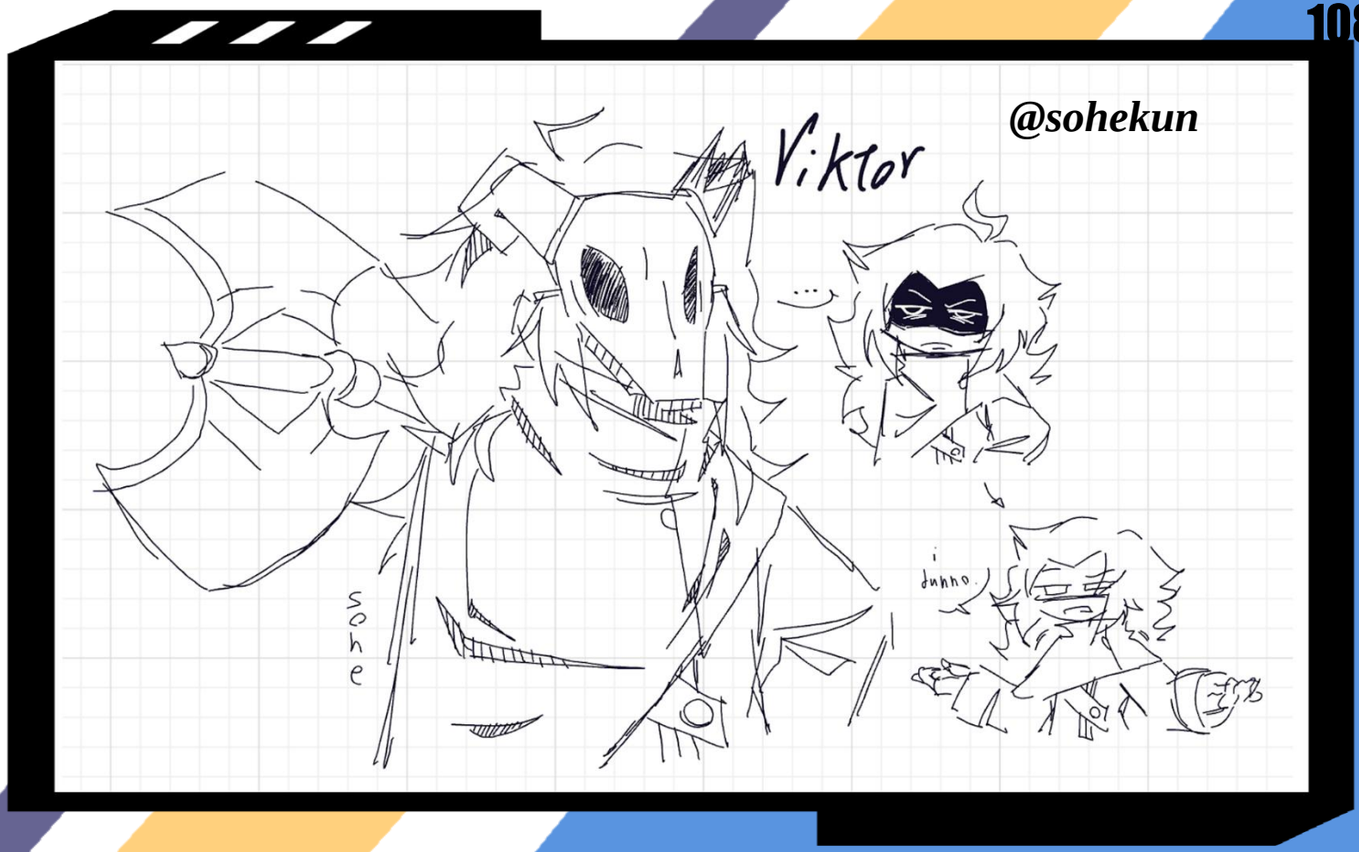
@sohekun

@fangnull

@Sonic32Super

LUMIN
✨KILL YOURSELF✨

@sohekun
Created by @sohe with WhiteboardFox.com


@sohekun
Viktor
...
i dunno
sohe

@fangnull
#forgot tbh
hmph...
click click
tch.
Have you never used a lighter before, kid?
#LOL
huh
#???

FALIN

@midasthegoldguyidk1

@fangnull

@fangnull
So just don't touch the dial and stay here a while with me!

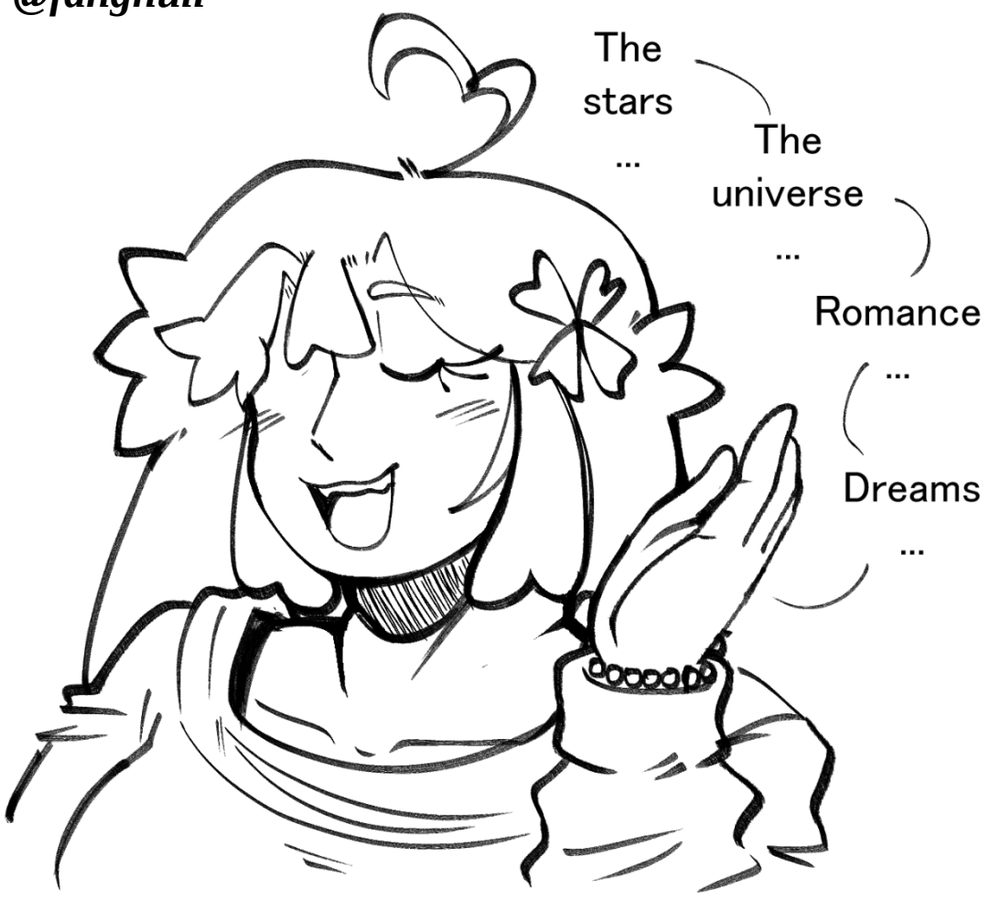
リトルボニーが好きなんだ
@sohekun
Created by @sohe with WhiteboardFox.com

@Vidd03k

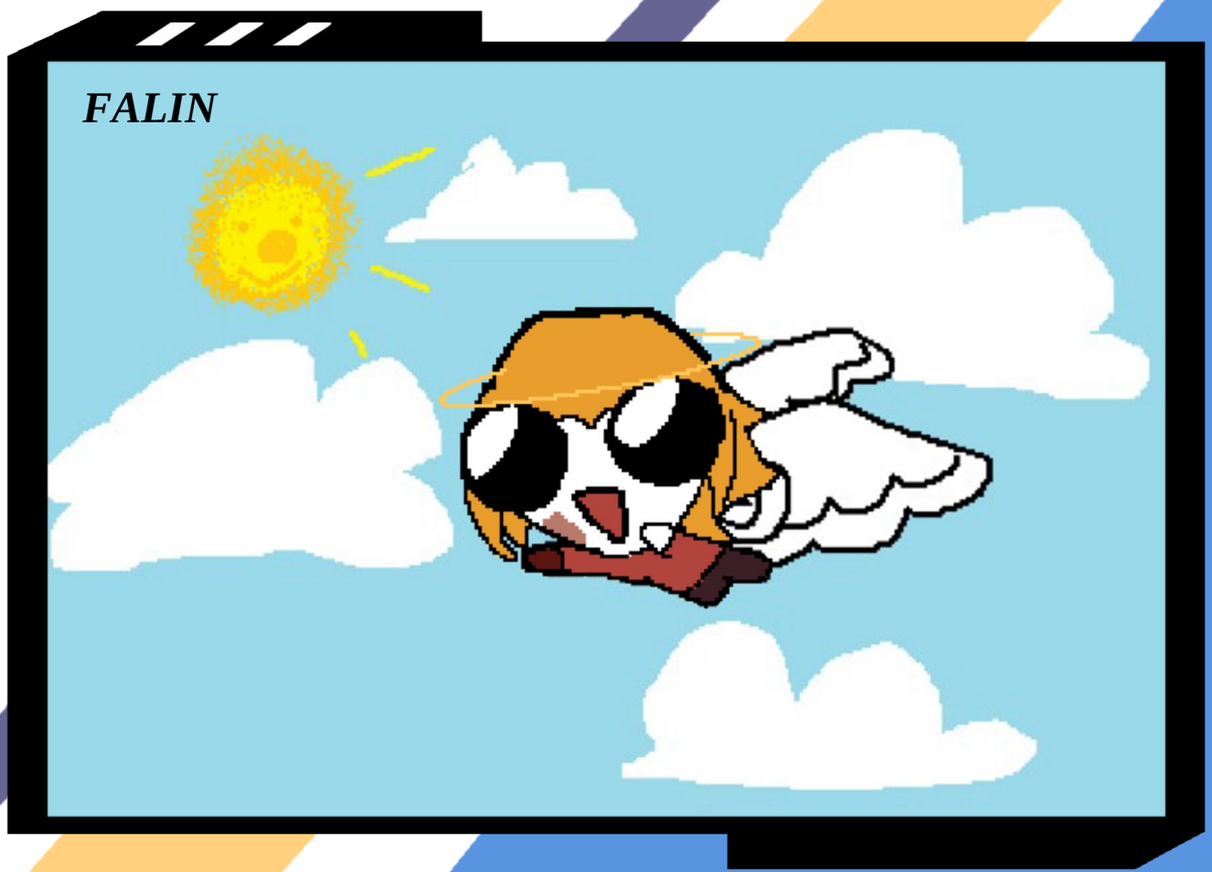
@fangnull

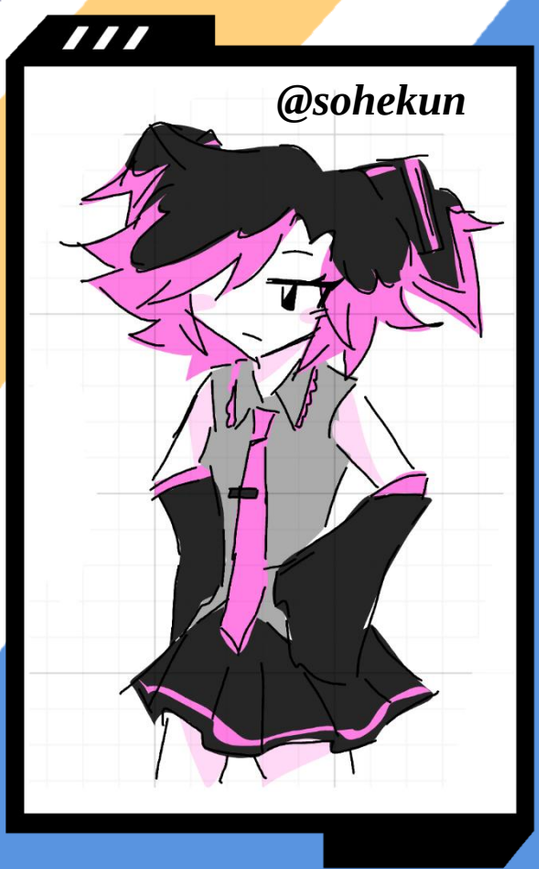
@sohekun

@fangnull



@sohekun


FALIN


@sohekun

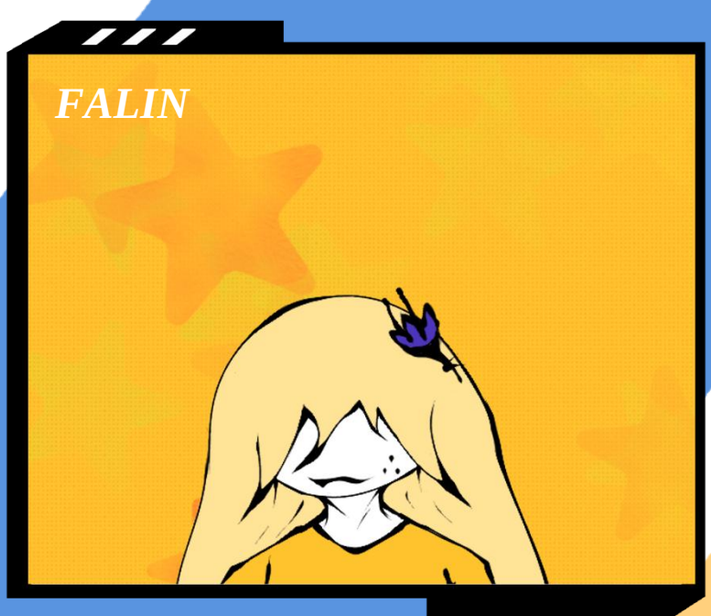
@fangnull

@SuperSonic32

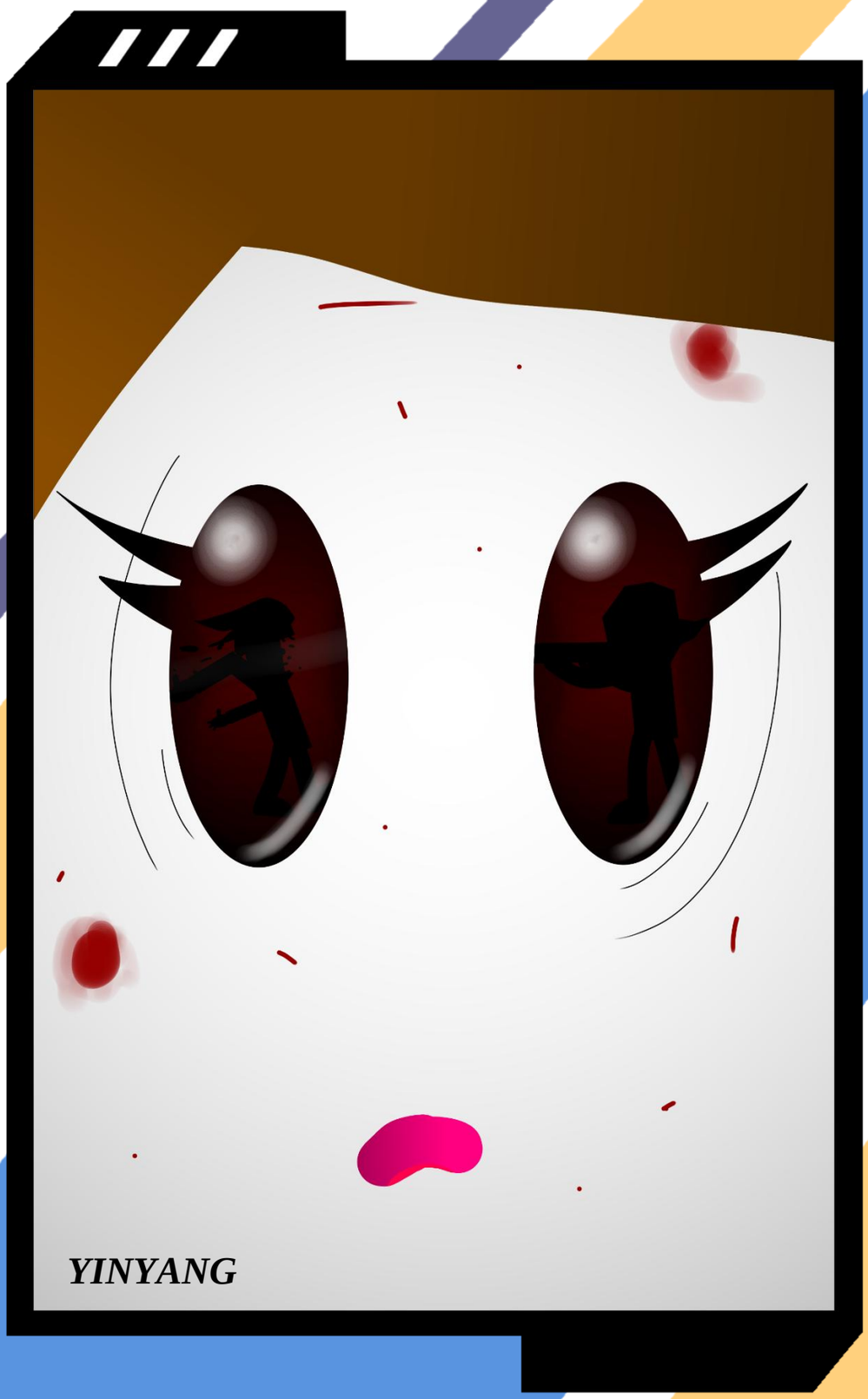
@fangnull

@Sonic32Super

@sohekun


FALIN

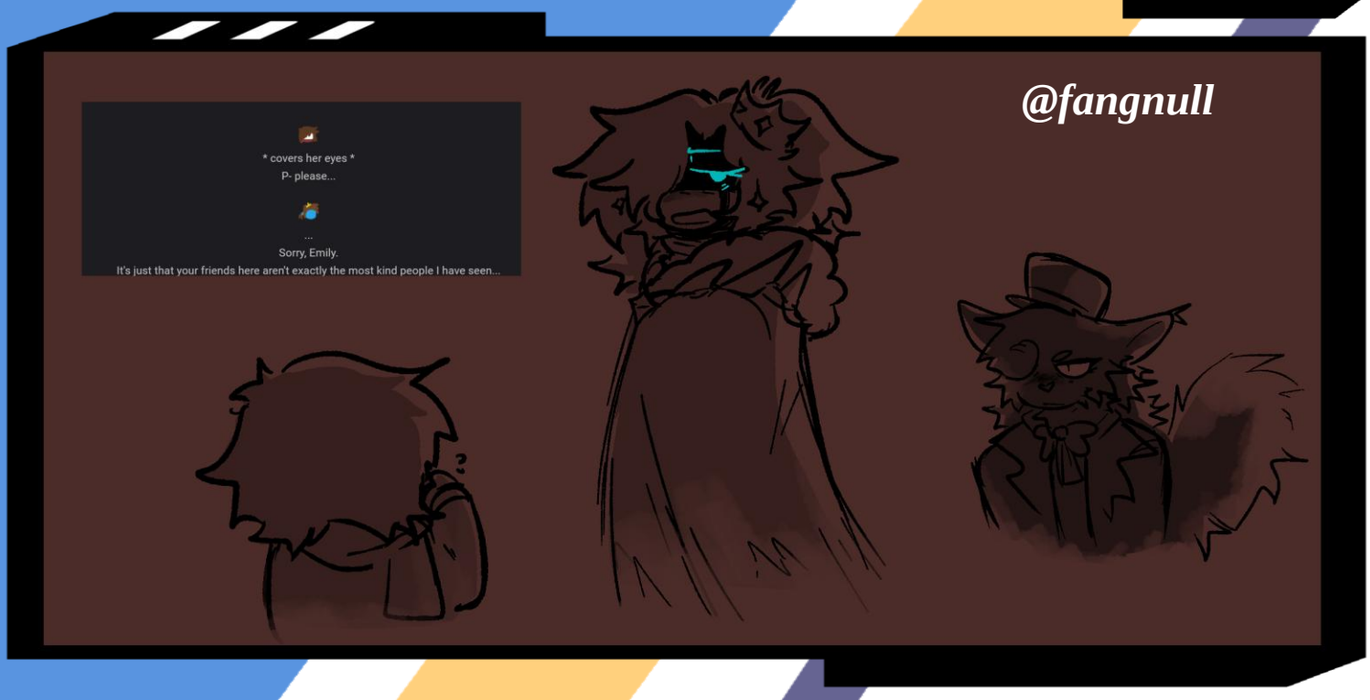
@Sonic32Super
sTaILS32

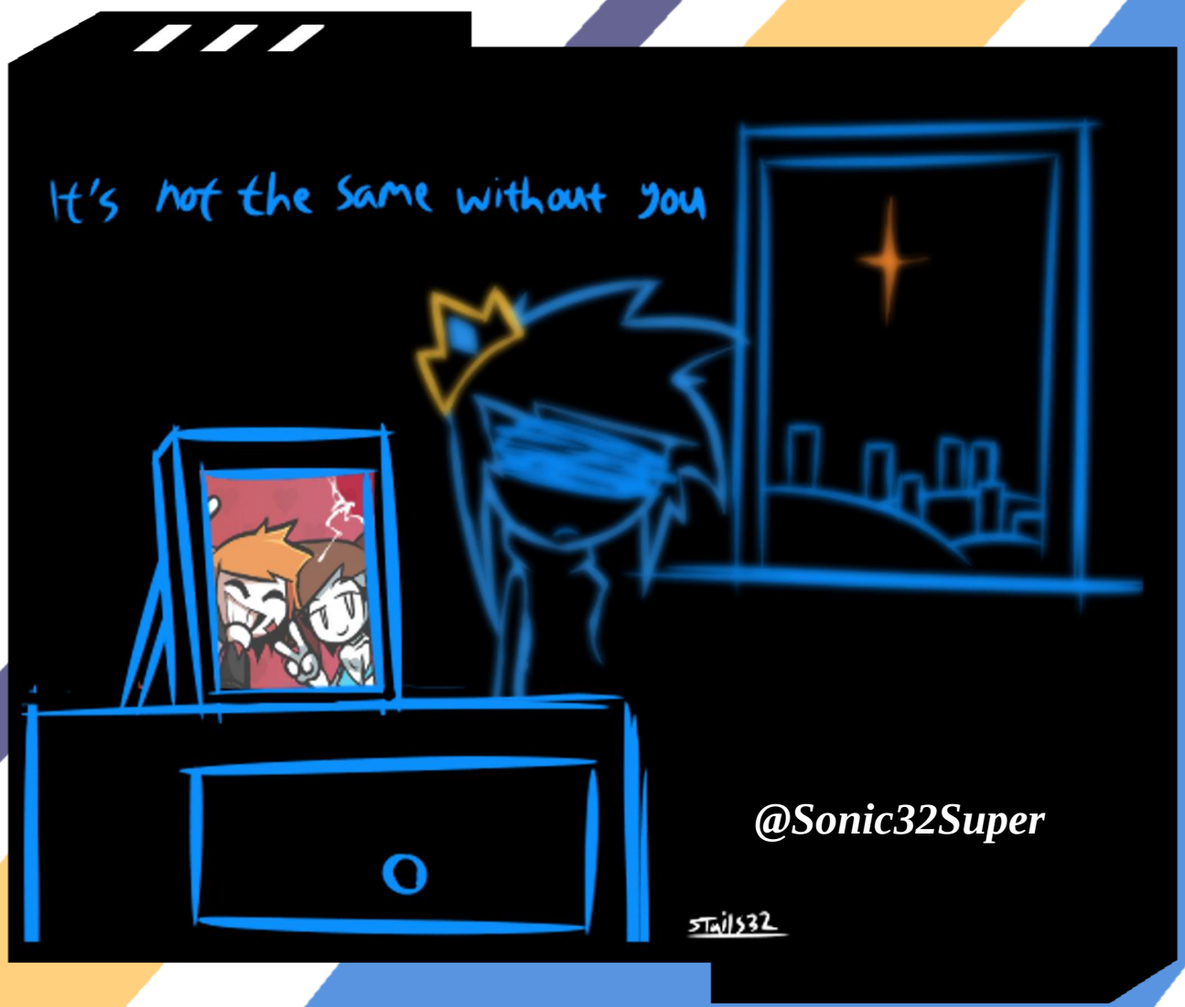

YINYANG

SNOW/ALEX
#1

FALIN

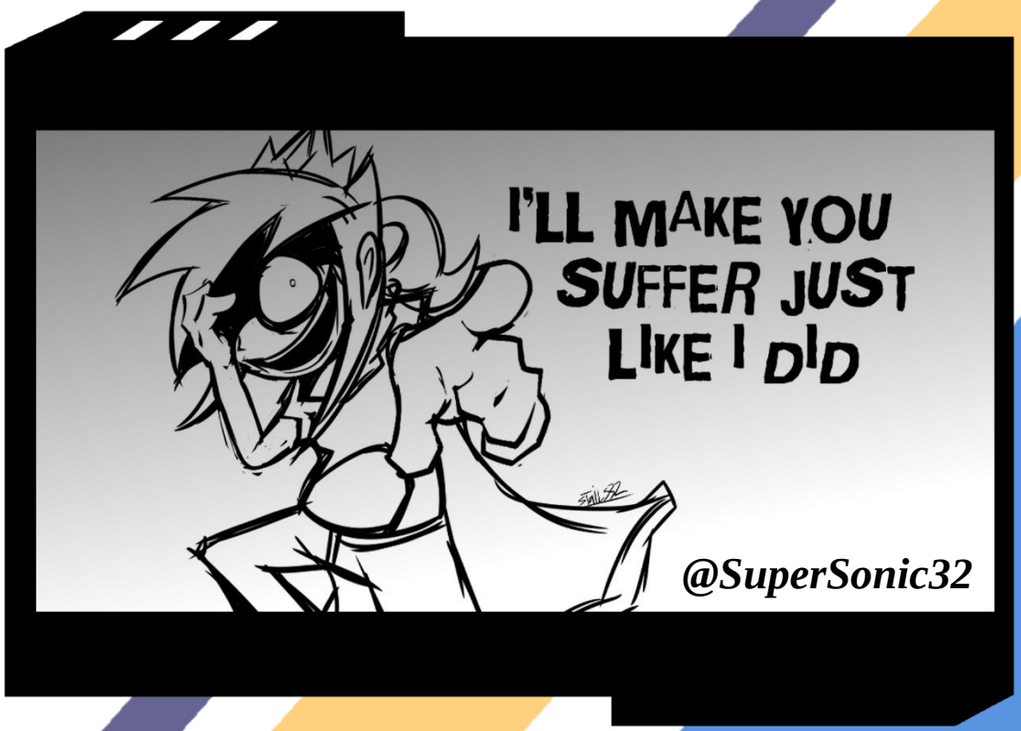
@sohekun

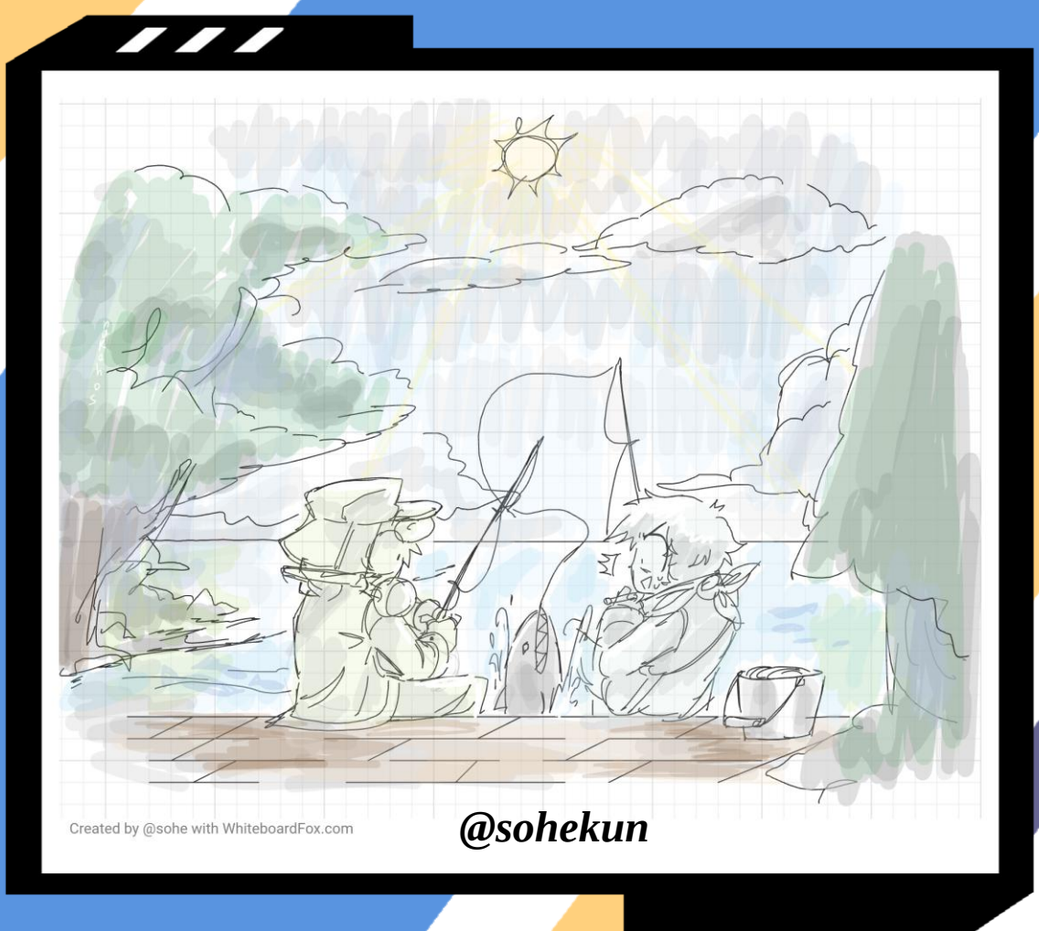

@fangnull
* covers her eyes *
P- please...
...
Sorry, Emily.
It's just that your friends here aren't exactly the most kind people I have seen...

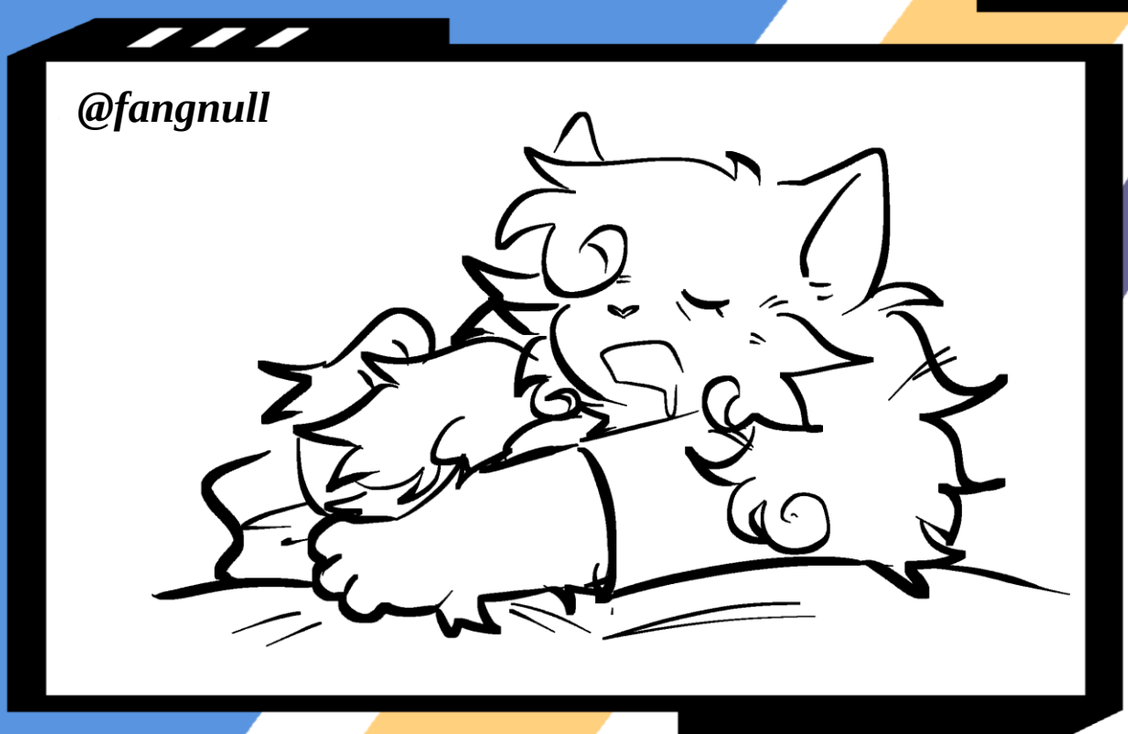

It's not the same without you
@Sonic32Super
STAILS32

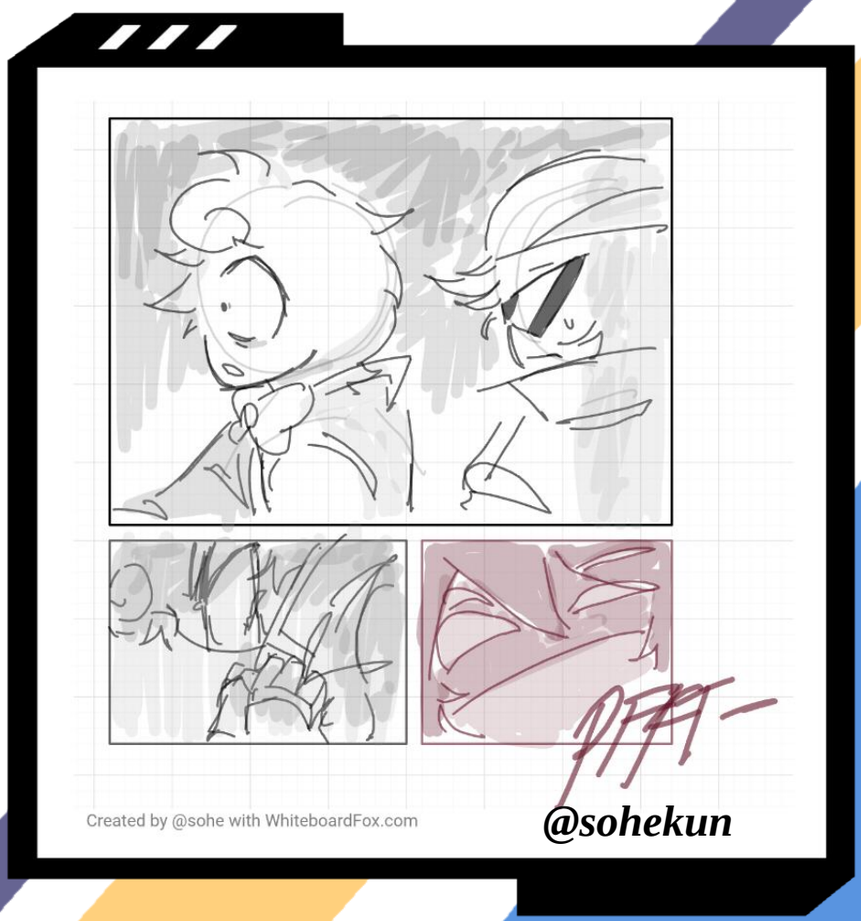
@sohekun

@fangnull


I'LL MAKE YOU SUFFER JUST LIKE I DID
@SuperSonic32

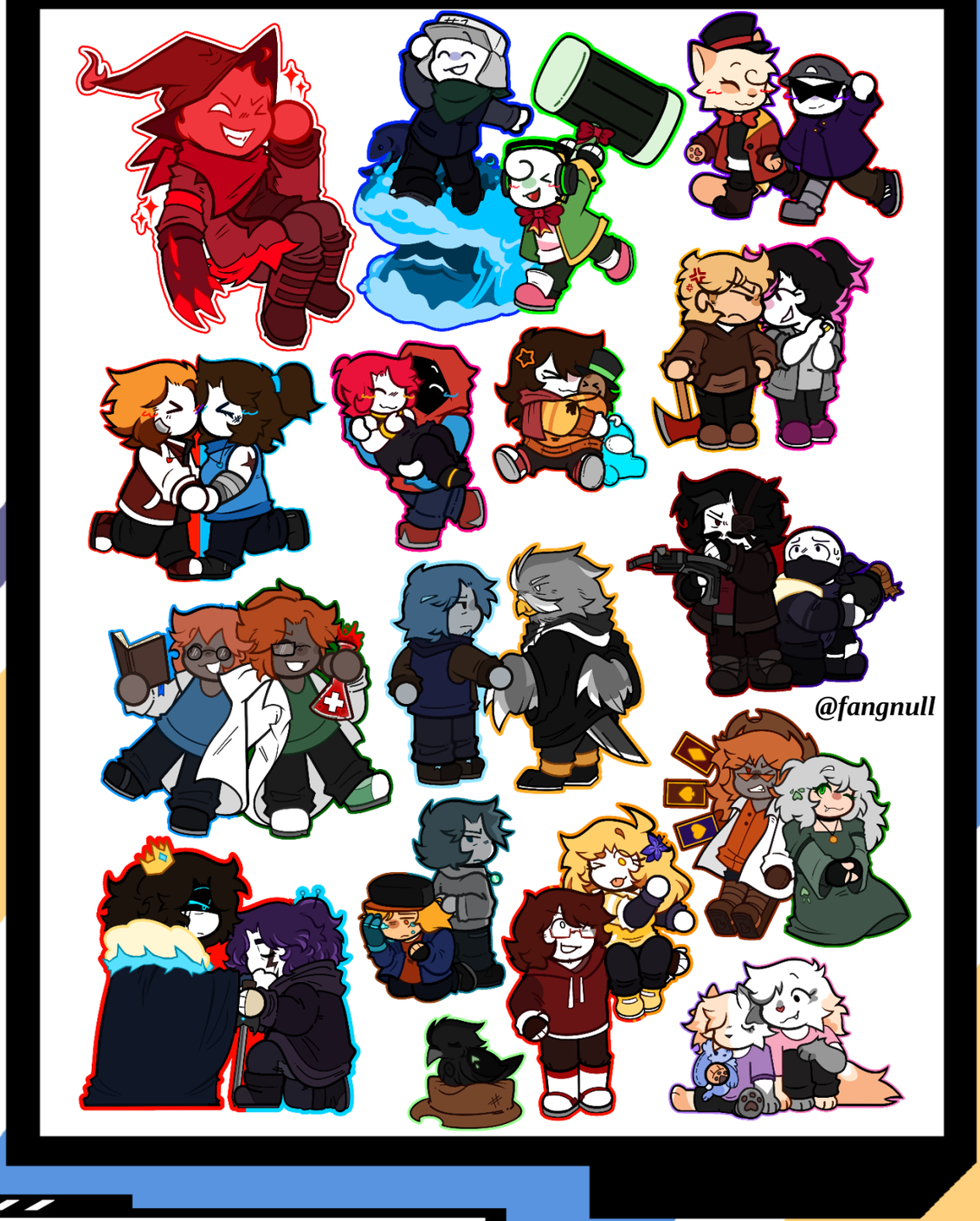

Created by @sohe with WhiteboardFox.com
@sohekun

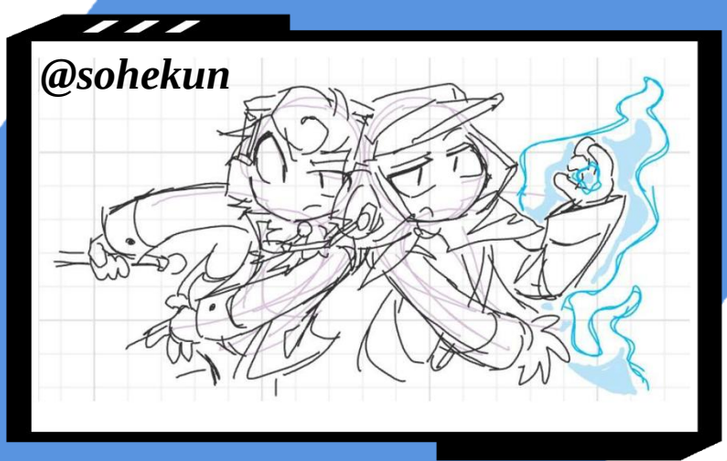

@fangnull


Created by @sohe with WhiteboardFox.com
@sohekun

FALIN

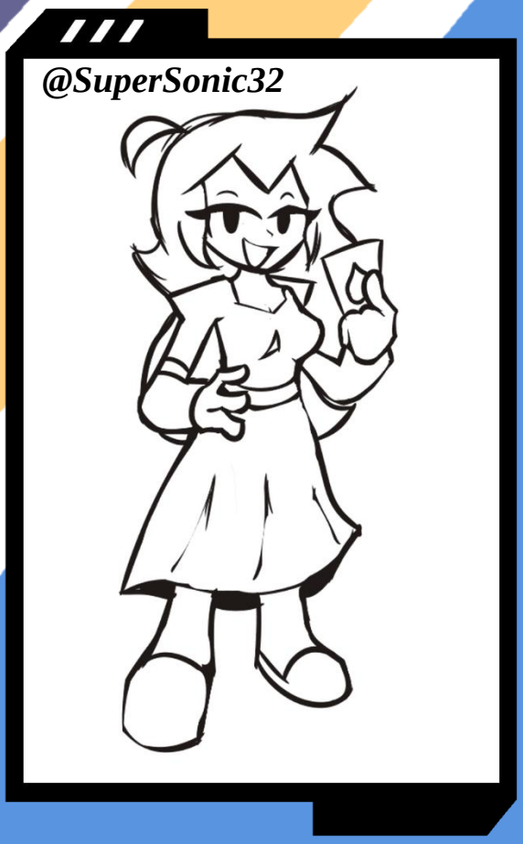
YINYANG
#1

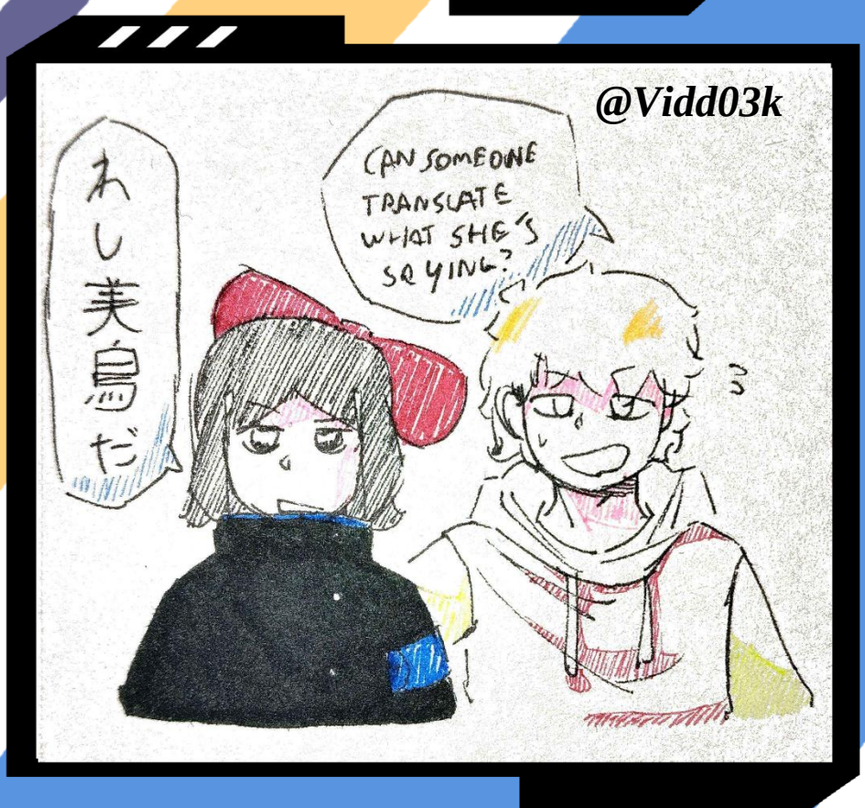

@fangnull


@sohekun

@SuperSonic32

Blud thinks he's mega man
@SuperSonic32


@SuperSonic32


@Vidd03k
CAN SOMEONE TRANSLATE WHAT SHE'S SAYING?
れし美鳥だ

@sohekun

@sohekun

@Vidd03k

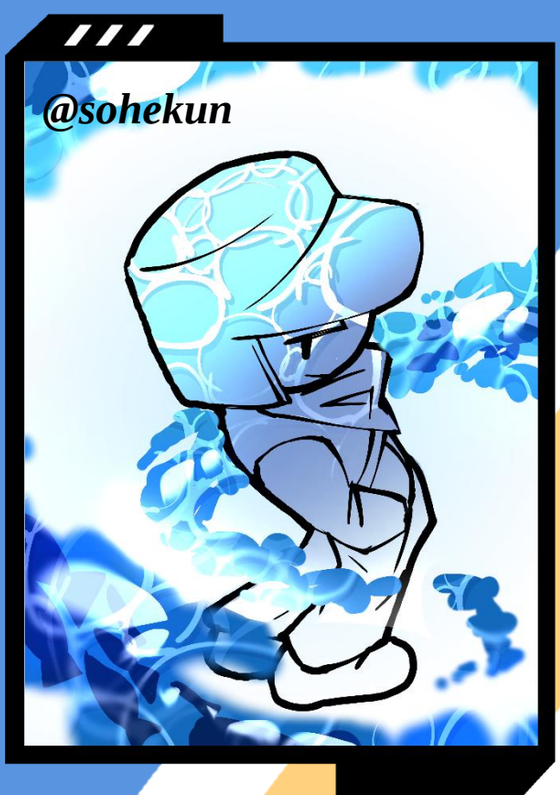
@fangnull

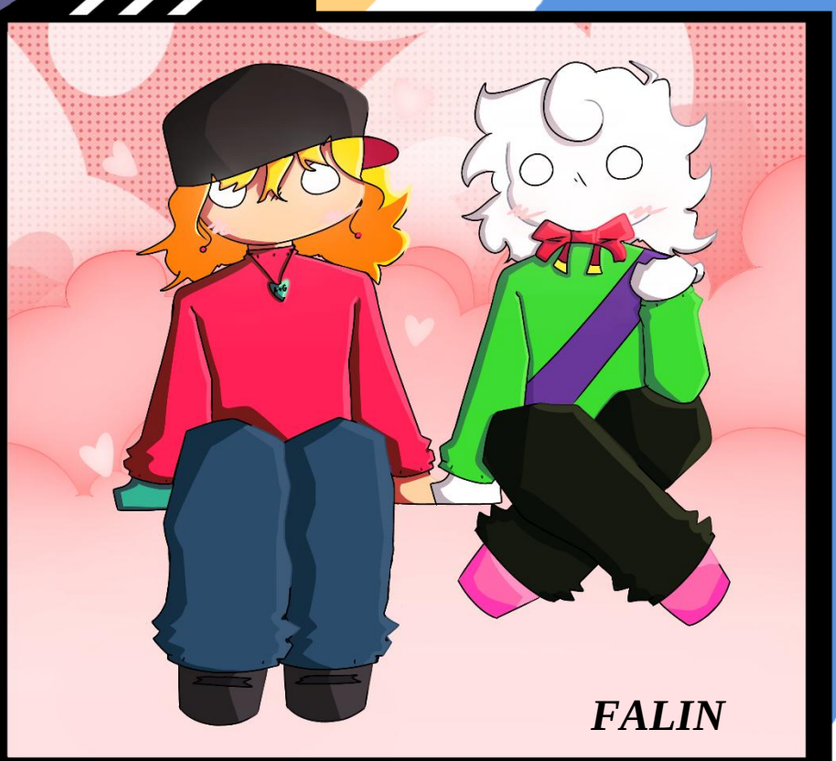
@midasthegoldguyidk1

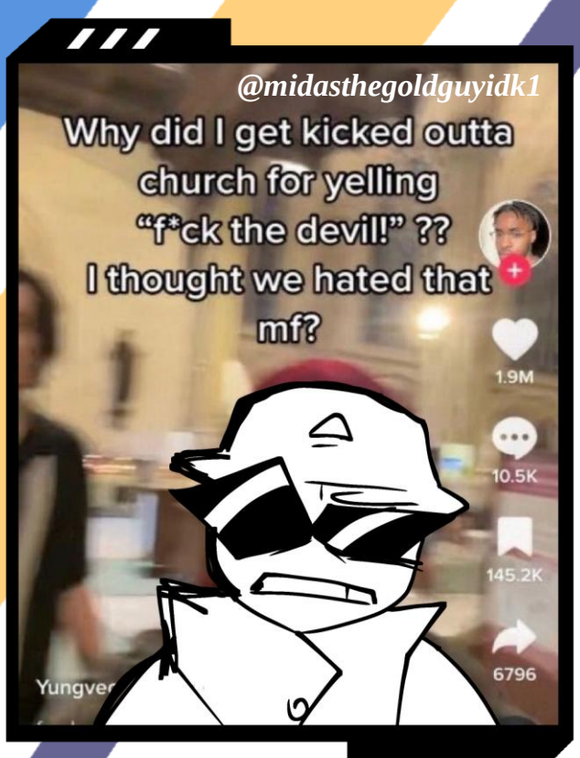
@sohekun

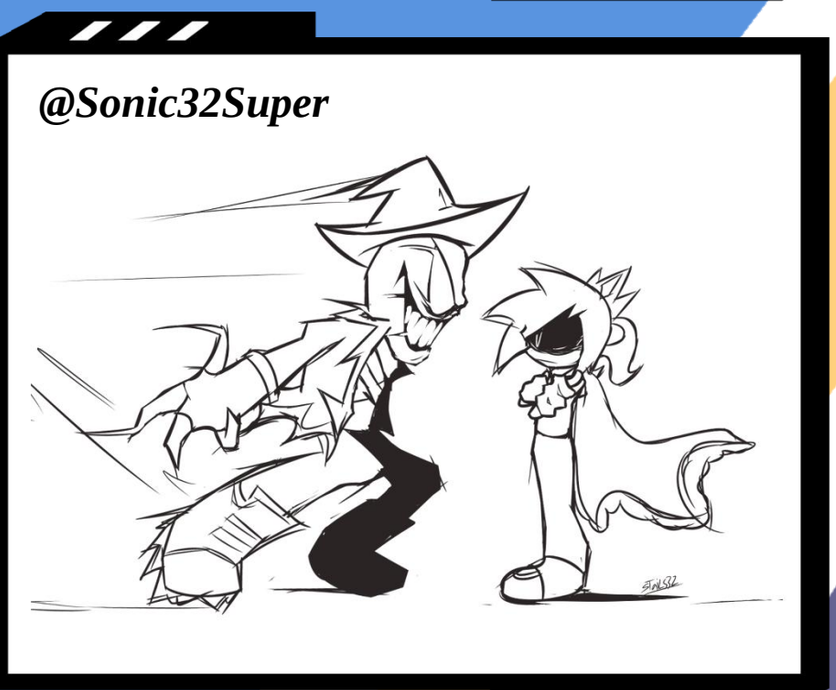
@sohekun

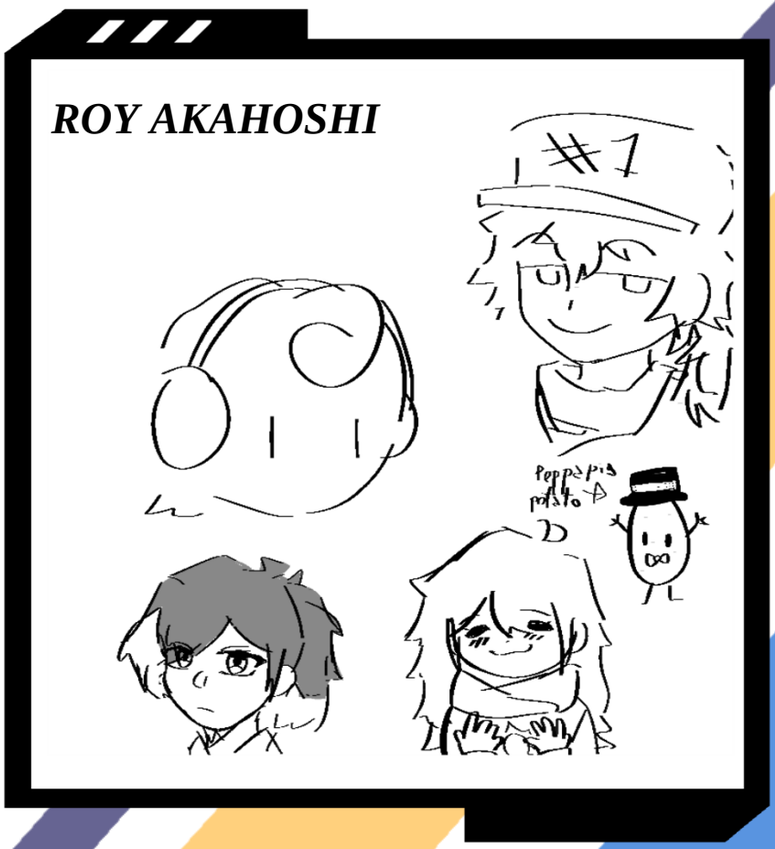
@fangnull
:)


@sohekun


FALIN


@midasthegoldguyidk1
Why did I get kicked outta church for yelling "f*ck the devil!" ?? I thought we hated that mf?
1.9M
10.5K
145.2K
6796
Yungver


@Sonic32Super


ROY AKAHOSHI
#1

@Sonic32Super

@Sonic32Super

@fangnull

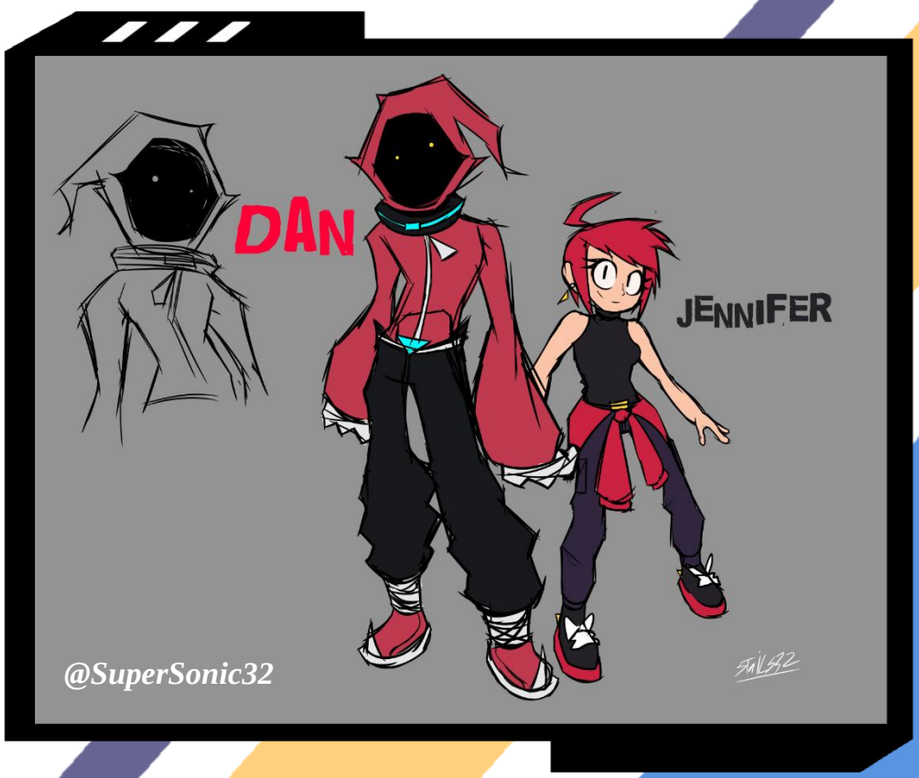
FALIN

@midasthegoldguyidk1

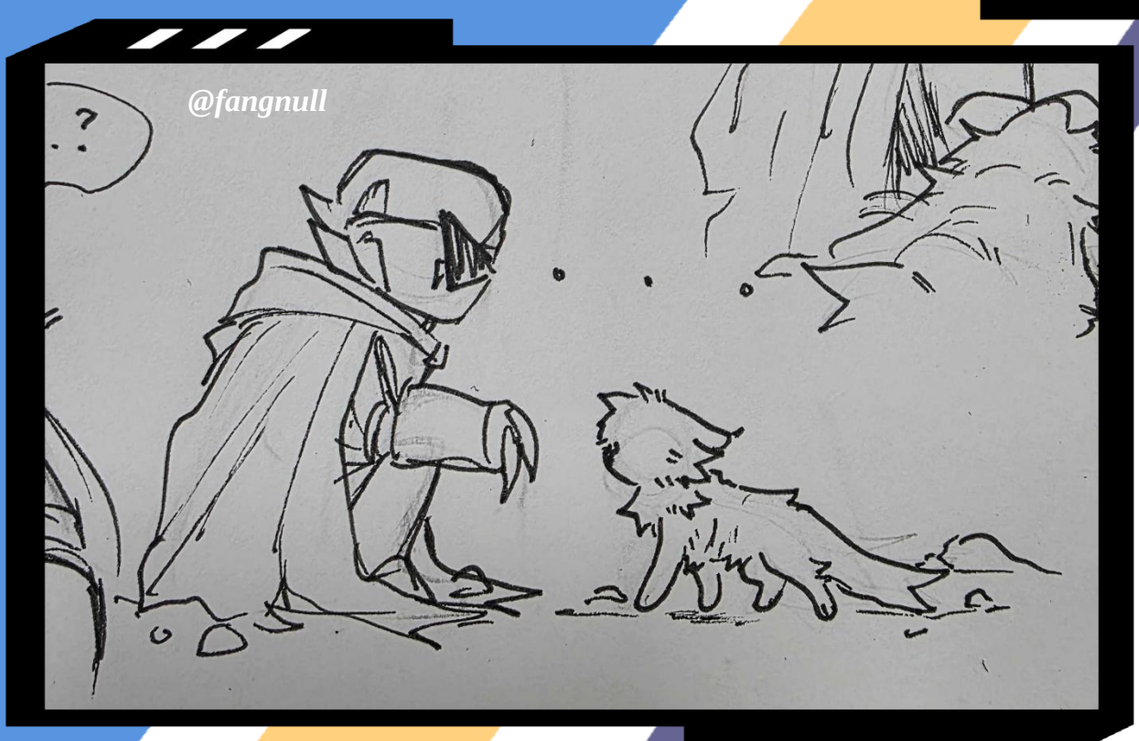
@sohekun

@SuperSonic32

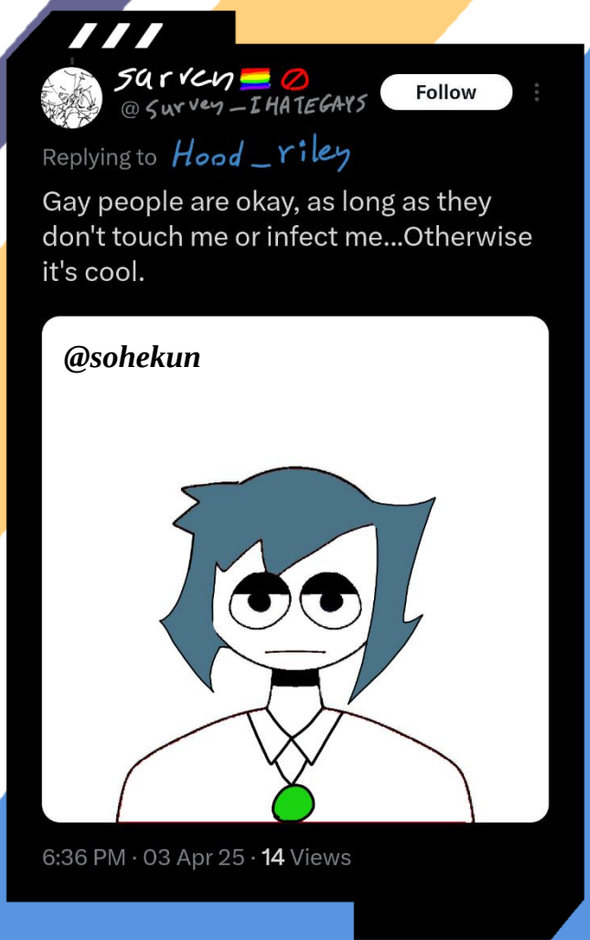
@sohekun


DAN
JENNIFER
@SuperSonic32

@SuperSonic32


@fangnull
?

@SuperSonic32


sarvcn
@survey_IHATEGAYS
Follow
Replying to Hood_riley
Gay people are okay, as long as they don't touch me or infect me...Otherwise it's cool.
@sohekun
6:36 PM · 03 Apr 25 · 14 Views

HAPPY 2ND BIRTHDAY LILY!
HAPPY BIRTH-DAY LILY!
@fangnull

Can you be more realistic.?
(Sloc.)
Too realistic!!
@midasthegoldguyidk1

WHAT'S NEXT?

With Volume 3 releasing, it's time for the next and final part of TE:R. Don't worry when I say "final" though, as Arc4 will be a very longwinded story with a bunch of chapters (I would assume longer than all previous arcs combined). It will be called "Hood Strikes Back!"

It will be the "final part" of the entire story unless I feel like going back and making more stories in the future. In short , Volume 4 will take a longgg time come out compared to the previous ones so if you want to get into the series proper, you can catch up with the series through the official Carrd website. Hope to see you guys on the next and final volume!

Also you can also check out The KAME カメ Show, a podcast ran by me and @Vidd03k on my youtube channel! We talk about a bunch of media ranging from mainstream to obscure ones. We will occasionally talk about our own works on there as well!

Logo drawn by @sohekun

Give both of us a follow to keep up with any future news about our projects! It’s certainly going to be exciting!

And of course, as its tradition, Turtle peacin’ out!